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MARIUS THE EPICUREAN

MARIUS THE EPICUREAN

HIS SENSATIONS AND IDEAS

BY

WALTER PATER, 1839-1894.

Χειμερινὸς ὄνειρος, ὅτε μήκισται αἱ νύκτες

VOLUME I

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Galen. AD 130 – 200

M. Aurelius b. 121 ruled 161 – 180 (died)

Apuleius (author of the Golden Ass) b. AD 124

Antoninus Pius AD 136 – 161

Lucian Greek writer. Contemporary of M. Aurelius

L. Verus Colleague on the throne with M. Aurelius AD 161–69.

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PART THE FIRST

CHAPTER I

"THE RELIGION OF NUMA"

As, in the triumph of Christianity, the old religion lingered latest in the country, and died out at last as but paganism—the religion of the villagers, before the advance of the Christian Church; so, in an earlier century, it was in places remote from town-life that the older and purer forms of paganism itself had survived the longest. While, in Rome, new religions had arisen with bewildering complexity around the dying old one, the earlier and simpler patriarchal religion, "the religion of Numa," as people loved to fancy, lingered on with little change amid the pastoral life, out of the habits and sentiment of which so much of it had grown. Glimpses of such a survival we may catch below the merely artificial attitudes of Latin pastoral poetry; in Tibullus especially, who has preserved for us many poetic details of old Roman religious usage.

> At mihi contingat patrios celebrare Penates,
> Reddereque antiquo menstrua thura Lari:

—he prays, with unaffected seriousness. Something liturgical, with repetitions of a consecrated form of words, is traceable in one of his elegies, as part of the order of a birthday sacrifice. The hearth, from a spark of which, as one form of old legend related, the child Romulus had been miraculously born, was still indeed an altar; and the worthiest sacrifice to the gods the perfect physical sanity of the young men and women, which the scrupulous ways of that religion of the hearth had tended to maintain. A religion of usages and sentiment rather than of facts and belief, and attached to very definite things and places — the oak of immemorial age, the rock on the heath fashioned by weather as if by some dim human art, the shadowy grove of ilex, passing into which one exclaimed involuntarily, in consecrated phrase, Deity is in this Place! *Numen Inest!*—it was in natural harmony with the temper of a quiet people amid the spectacle of rural life, like that simpler faith between man and man, which Tibullus expressly connects with the period when, with an inexpensive worship, the old wooden gods had been still pressed for room in their homely little shrines.

And about the time when the dying Antoninus Pius ordered his golden image of Fortune to be carried into the chamber of his successor (now about to test the truth of the old Platonic contention, that the world would at last find itself

happy, could it detach some reluctant philosophic student from the more desirable life of celestial contemplation, and compel him to rule it), there was a boy living in an old country-house, half farm, half villa, who, for himself, recruited that body of antique traditions by a spontaneous force of religious veneration such as had originally called them into being. More than a century and a half had past since Tibullus had written; but the restoration of religious usages, and their retention where they still survived, was meantime come to be the fashion through the influence of imperial example; and what had been in the main a matter of family pride with his father, was sustained by a native instinct of devotion in the young Marius. A sense of conscious powers external to ourselves, pleased or displeased by the right or wrong conduct of every circumstance of daily life—that *conscience*, of which the old Roman religion was a formal, habitual recognition, was become in him a powerful current of feeling and observance. The old-fashioned, partly puritanic awe, the power of which Wordsworth noted and valued so highly in a northern peasantry, had its counterpart in the feeling of the Roman lad, as he passed the spot, "touched of heaven," where the lightning had struck dead an aged labourer in the field: an upright stone, still with mouldering garlands about it, marked the place. He brought to that system of symbolic

usages, and they in turn developed in him further, a great seriousness—an impressibility to the sacredness of time, of life and its events, and the circumstances of family fellowship; of such gifts to men as fire, water, the earth, from labour on which they live, really understood by him as gifts—a sense of religious responsibility in the reception of them. It was a religion for the most part of fear, of multitudinous scruples, of a year-long burden of forms; yet rarely (on clear summer mornings, for instance) the thought of those heavenly powers afforded a welcome channel for the almost stifling sense of health and delight in him, and relieved it as gratitude to the gods.

The day of the "little" or private *Ambarvalia* was come, to be celebrated by a single family for the welfare of all belonging to it, as the great college of the Arval Brothers officiated at Rome in the interest of the whole state. At the appointed time all work ceases; the instruments of labour lie untouched, hung with wreaths of flowers, while masters and servants together go in solemn procession along the dry paths of vineyard and cornfield, conducting the victims, whose blood is presently to be shed for the purification from all natural or supernatural taint of the lands they have "gone about." The old Latin words of the liturgy, to be said as the procession moved on its way, though their precise meaning was long

since become unintelligible, were recited from an ancient illuminated roll, kept in the painted chest in the hall, together with the family records. Early on that day the girls of the farm had been busy in the great portico, filling large baskets with flowers plucked short from branches of apple and cherry, then in spacious bloom, to strew before the quaint images of the gods—Ceres and Bacchus and the yet more mysterious Dea Dia — as they passed through the fields, carried in their little houses on the shoulders of white-clad youths, who were understood to proceed to this office in perfect temperance, as pure in soul and body as the air they breathed in the firm weather of that early summer-time. The clean lustral water and the full incense-box were carried after them. The altars were gay with garlands of wool and the more sumptuous sort of blossom and green herbs to be thrown into the sacrificial fire, fresh-gathered this morning from a particular plot in the old garden, set apart for the purpose. Just then the young leaves were almost as fragrant as flowers, and the scent of the bean-fields mingled pleasantly with the cloud of incense. But for the monotonous intonation of the liturgy by the priests, clad in their strange, stiff, antique vestments, and bearing ears of green corn upon their heads, secured by flowing bands of white, the procession moved in absolute stillness, all persons, even the children, abstaining from

speech after the utterance of the pontifical formula, *Favete linguis!* — Silence! Propitious Silence!—lest any words save those proper to the occasion should hinder the religious efficacy of the rite.

With the lad Marius, who, as the head of his house, took a leading part in the ceremonies of the day, there was a devout effort to complete this impressive outward silence by that inward tacitness of mind, esteemed so important by religious Romans in the performance of these sacred functions. To him the sustained stillness without seemed really but to be waiting upon that interior, mental condition of preparation or expectancy, for which he was just then intently striving. The persons about him, certainly, had never been challenged by those prayers and ceremonies to any ponderings on the divine nature: they conceived them rather to be the appointed means of setting such troublesome movements at rest. By them, "the religion of Numa," so staid, ideal and comely, the object of so much jealous conservatism, though of direct service as lending sanction to a sort of high scrupulosity, especially in the chief points of domestic conduct, was mainly prized as being, through its hereditary character, something like a personal distinction — as contributing, among the other accessories of an ancient house, to the production of that aristocratic atmosphere which separated them from newly-made people. But

in the young Marius, the very absence from those venerable usages of all definite history and dogmatic interpretation, had already awakened much speculative activity; and to-day, starting from the actual details of the divine service, some very lively surmises, though scarcely distinct enough to be thoughts, were moving backwards and forwards in his mind, as the stirring wind had done all day among the trees, and were like the passing of some mysterious influence over all the elements of his nature and experience. One thing only distracted him —a certain pity at the bottom of his heart, and almost on his lips, for the sacrificial victims and their looks of terror, rising almost to disgust at the central act of the sacrifice itself, a piece of everyday butcher's work, such as we decorously hide out of sight; though some then present certainly displayed a frank curiosity in the spectacle thus permitted them on a religious pretext. The old sculptors of the great procession on the frieze of the *Parthenon* at Athens, have delineated the placid heads of the victims led in it to sacrifice, with a perfect feeling for animals in forcible contrast with any indifference as to their sufferings. It was this contrast that distracted Marius now in the blessing of his fields, and qualified his devout absorption upon the scrupulous fulfilment of all the details of the ceremonial, as the procession approached the altars.

The names of that great populace of "little gods," dear to the Roman home, which the pontiffs had placed on the sacred list of the *Indigitamenta*, to be invoked, because they can help, on special occasions, were not forgotten in the long litany — Vatican who causes the infant to utter his first cry, Fabulinus who prompts his first word, Cuba who keeps him quiet in his cot, Domiduca especially, for whom Marius had through life a particular memory and devotion, the goddess who watches over one's safe coming home. The urns of the dead in the family chapel received their due service. They also were now become something divine, a goodly company of friendly and protecting spirits, encamped about the place of their former abode —above all others, the father, dead ten years before, of whom, remembering but a tall, grave figure above him in early childhood, Marius habitually thought as a *genius* a little cold and severe.

> Candidus insuetum miratur limen Olympi,
> Sub pedibusque videt nubes et sidera.—

Perhaps! — but certainly needs his altar here below, and garlands to-day upon his urn. But the dead *genii* were satisfied with little — a few violets, a cake dipped in wine, or a morsel of honeycomb. Daily, from the time when his childish footsteps were still uncertain, had Marius taken them their portion of the family meal, at the second course, amidst the silence

of the company. They loved those who brought them their sustenance; but, deprived of these services, would be heard wandering through the house, crying sorrowfully in the stillness of the night.

And those simple gifts, like other objects as trivial—bread, oil, wine, milk—had regained for him, by their use in such religious service, that poetic and as it were moral significance, which surely belongs to all the means of daily life, could we but break through the veil of our familiarity with things by no means vulgar in themselves. A hymn followed, while the whole assembly stood with veiled faces. The fire rose up readily from the altars, in clean, bright flame —a favourable omen, making it a duty to render the mirth of the evening complete. Old wine was poured out freely for the servants at supper in the great kitchen, where they had worked in the imperfect light through the long evenings of winter. The young Marius himself took but a very sober part in the noisy feasting. A devout, regretful after-taste of what had been really beautiful in the ritual he had accomplished took him early away, that he might the better recall in reverie all the circumstances of the celebration of the day. As he sank into a sleep, pleasant with all the influences of long hours in the open air, he seemed still to be moving in procession through the fields, with a kind of pleasurable awe. That feeling was still upon him as he

awoke amid the beating of violent rain on the shutters, in the first storm of the season. The thunder which startled him from sleep seemed to make the solitude of his chamber almost painfully complete, as if the nearness of those angry clouds shut him up in a close place alone in the world. Then he thought of the sort of protection which that day's ceremonies assured. To procure an agreement with the gods—*Pacem deorum exposcere :* that was the meaning of what they had all day been busy upon. In a faith, sincere but half-suspicious, he would fain have those Powers at least not against him. His own nearer household gods were all around his bed. The spell of his religion as a part of the very essence of home, its intimacy, its dignity and security, was forcible at that moment ; only, it seemed to involve certain heavy demands upon him.

CHAPTER II

WHITE-NIGHTS

To an instinctive seriousness, the material abode in which the childhood of Marius was passed had largely added. Nothing, you felt, as you first caught sight of that coy, retired place,—surely nothing could happen there, without its full accompaniment of thought or reverie. *White-nights!* so you might interpret its old Latin name.[1] "The red rose came first," says a quaint German mystic, speaking of "the mystery of so-called *white* things," as being "ever an after-thought—the doubles, or seconds, of real things, and themselves but half-real, half-material—the white queen, the white witch, the white mass, which, as the black mass is a travesty of the true mass turned to evil by horrible old witches, is celebrated by young candidates for the priesthood with an unconsecrated host, by way of rehearsal." So, white-nights, I suppose, after something like the same analogy, should be

[1] *Ad Vigilias Albas.*

nights not of quite blank forgetfulness, but passed in continuous dreaming, only half veiled by sleep. Certainly the place was, in such case, true to its fanciful name in this, that you might very well conceive, in face of it, that dreaming even in the daytime might come to much there.

The young Marius represented an ancient family whose estate had come down to him much curtailed through the extravagance of a certain Marcellus two generations before, a favourite in his day of the fashionable world at Rome, where he had at least spent his substance with a correctness of taste Marius might seem to have inherited from him ; as he was believed also to resemble him in a singularly pleasant smile, consistent however, in the younger face, with some degree of sombre expression when the mind within was but slightly moved.

As the means of life decreased, the farm had crept nearer and nearer to the dwelling-house, about which there was therefore a trace of workday negligence or homeliness, not without its picturesque charm for some, for the young master himself among them. The more observant passer-by would note, curious as to the inmates, a certain amount of dainty care amid that neglect, as if it came in part, perhaps, from a reluctance to disturb old associations. It was significant of the national character, that a sort of elegant *gentleman* farming, as we say, had been much affected by some of the most cultivated

Romans. But it became something more than an elegant diversion, something of a serious business, with the household of Marius ; and his actual interest in the cultivation of the earth and the care of flocks had brought him, at least, intimately near to those elementary conditions of life, a reverence for which, the great Roman poet, as he has shown by his own half-mystic pre-occupation with them, held to be the ground of primitive Roman religion, as of primitive morals. But then, farm-life in Italy, including the culture of the olive and the vine, has a grace of its own, and might well contribute to the production of an ideal dignity of character, like that of nature itself in this gifted region. Vulgarity seemed impossible. The place, though impoverished, was still deservedly dear, full of venerable memories, and with a living sweetness of its own for to-day.

To hold by such ceremonial traditions had been a part of the struggling family pride of the lad's father, to which the example of the head of the state, old Antoninus Pius—an example to be still further enforced by his successor—had given a fresh though perhaps somewhat artificial popularity. It had been consistent with many another homely and old-fashioned trait in him, not to undervalue the charm of exclusiveness and immemorial authority, which membership in a local priestly college, hereditary in his house, conferred upon him. To set a real value on

these things was but one element in that pious concern for his home and all that belonged to it, which, as Marius afterwards discovered, had been a strong motive with his father. The ancient hymn—*Jana Novella !*—was still sung by his people, as the new moon grew bright in the west, and even their wild custom of leaping through heaps of blazing straw on a certain night in summer was not discouraged. The privilege of augury itself, according to tradition, had at one time belonged to his race ; and if you can imagine how, once in a way, an impressible boy might have an *inkling*, an inward mystic intimation, of the meaning and consequences of all that, what was implied in it becoming explicit for him, you conceive aright the mind of Marius, in whose house the auspices were still carefully consulted before every undertaking of moment.

The devotion of the father then had handed on loyally—and that is all many not unimportant persons ever find to do—a certain tradition of life, which came to mean much for the young Marius. The feeling with which he thought of his dead father was almost exclusively that of awe ; though crossed at times by a not unpleasant sense of liberty, as he could but confess to himself, pondering, in the actual absence of so weighty and continual a restraint, upon the arbitrary power which Roman religion and Roman law gave to the parent over the son.

On the part of his mother, on the other hand, entertaining the husband's memory, there was a sustained freshness of regret, together with the recognition, as Marius fancied, of some costly self-sacrifice to be credited to the dead. The life of the widow, languid and shadowy enough but for the poignancy of that regret, was like one long service to the departed soul; its many annual observances centering about the funeral urn—a tiny, delicately carved marble house, still white and fair, in the family-chapel, wreathed always with the richest flowers from the garden. To the dead, in fact, was conceded in such places a somewhat closer neighbourhood to the old homes they were thought still to protect, than is usual with us, or was usual in Rome itself—a closeness which the living welcomed, so diverse are the ways of our human sentiment, and in which the more wealthy, at least in the country, might indulge themselves. All this Marius followed with a devout interest, sincerely touched and awed by his mother's sorrow. After the deification of the emperors, we are told, it was considered impious so much as to use any coarse expression in the presence of their images. To Marius the whole of life seemed full of sacred presences, demanding of him a similar collectedness. The severe and archaic religion of the villa, as he conceived it, begot in him a sort of devout circumspection lest he should fall short at any point of the demand upon him of any-

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thing in which deity was concerned. He must satisfy with a kind of sacred equity, he must be very cautious lest he be found wanting to, the claims of others, in their joys and calamities—the happiness which deity sanctioned, or the blows in which it made itself felt. And from habit, this feeling of a responsibility towards the world of men and things, towards a claim for due sentiment concerning them on his side, came to be a part of his nature not to be put off. It kept him serious and dignified amid the Epicurean speculations which in after years much engrossed him, and when he had learned to think of all religions as indifferent, serious amid many fopperies and through many languid days, and made him anticipate all his life long as a thing towards which he must carefully train himself, some great occasion of self-devotion, such as really came, that should consecrate his life, and, it might be, its memory with others, as the early Christian looked forward to martyrdom at the end of his course, as a seal of worth upon it.

The traveller, descending from the slopes of Luna, even as he got his first view of the *Port-of-Venus*, would pause by the way, to read the face, as it were, of so beautiful a dwelling-place, lying away from the white road, at the point where it began to decline somewhat steeply to the marsh-land below. The building of pale red and yellow marble, mellowed by age, which he saw beyond the gates, was indeed but the ex-

quisite fragment of a once large and sumptuous villa. Two centuries of the play of the sea-wind were in the velvet of the mosses which lay along its inaccessible ledges and angles. Here and there the marble plates had slipped from their places, where the delicate weeds had forced their way. The graceful wildness which prevailed in garden and farm gave place to a singular nicety about the actual habitation, and a still more scrupulous sweetness and order reigned within. The old Roman architects seem to have well understood the decorative value of the floor—the real economy there was, in the production of rich interior effect, of a somewhat lavish expenditure upon the surface they trod on. The pavement of the hall had lost something of its evenness; but, though a little rough to the foot, polished and cared for like a piece of silver, looked, as mosaic-work is apt to do, its best in old age. Most noticeable among the ancestral masks, each in its little cedarn chest below the cornice, was that of the wasteful but elegant Marcellus, with the quaint resemblance in its yellow waxen features to Marius, just then so full of animation and country colour. A chamber, curved ingeniously into oval form, which he had added to the mansion, still contained his collection of works of art; above all, that head of Medusa, for which the villa was famous. The spoilers of one of the old Greek towns on the coast had flung away or lost the

thing, as it seemed, in some rapid flight across the river below, from the sands of which it was drawn up in a fisherman's net, with the fine golden *laminæ* still clinging here and there to the bronze. It was Marcellus also who had contrived the prospect-tower of two storeys with the white pigeon-house above, so characteristic of the place. The little glazed windows in the uppermost chamber framed each its dainty landscape—the pallid crags of Carrara, like wildly twisted snow-drifts above the purple heath; the distant harbour with its freight of white marble going to sea; the lighthouse temple of *Venus Speciosa* on its dark headland, amid the long-drawn curves of white breakers. Even on summer nights the air there had always a motion in it, and drove the scent of the new-mown hay along all the passages of the house.

Something pensive, spell-bound, and but half real, something cloistral or monastic, as we should say, united to this exquisite order, made the whole place seem to Marius, as it were, *sacellum*, the peculiar sanctuary, of his mother, who, still in real widowhood, provided the deceased Marius the elder with that secondary sort of life which we can give to the dead, in our intensely realised memory of them—the "subjective immortality," to use a modern phrase, for which many a Roman epitaph cries out plaintively to widow or sister or daughter, still in the land of the living. Certainly, if any

such considerations regarding them do reach the shadowy people, he enjoyed that secondary existence, that warm place still left, in thought at least, beside the living, the desire for which is actually, in various forms, so great a motive with most of us. And Marius the younger, even thus early, came to think of women's tears, of women's hands to lay one to rest, in death as in the sleep of childhood, as a sort of natural want. The soft lines of the white hands and face, set among the many folds of the veil and stole of the Roman widow, busy upon her needlework, or with music sometimes, defined themselves for him as the typical expression of maternity. Helping her with her white and purple wools, and caring for her musical instruments, he won, as if from the handling of such things, an urbane and feminine refinement, qualifying duly his country-grown habits—the sense of a certain delicate blandness, which he relished, above all, on returning to the "chapel" of his mother, after long days of open-air exercise, in winter or stormy summer. For poetic souls in old Italy felt, hardly less strongly than the English, the pleasures of winter, of the hearth, with the very dead warm in its generous heat, keeping the young myrtles in flower, though the hail is beating hard without. One important principle, of fruit afterwards in his Roman life, that relish for the country fixed deeply in him; in the winters especially, when the sufferings of

the animal world became so palpable even to the least observant. It fixed in him a sympathy for all creatures, for the almost human troubles and sicknesses of the flocks, for instance. It was a feeling which had in it something of religious veneration for life as such—for that mysterious essence which man is powerless to create in even the feeblest degree. One by one, at the desire of his mother, the lad broke down his cherished traps and springes for the hungry wild birds on the salt marsh. A white bird, she told him once, looking at him gravely, a bird which he must carry in his bosom across a crowded public place—his own soul was like that! Would it reach the hands of his good genius on the opposite side, unruffled and unsoiled? And as his mother became to him the very type of maternity in things, its unfailing pity and protectiveness, and maternity itself the central type of all love; —so, that beautiful dwelling-place lent the reality of concrete outline to a peculiar ideal of home, which throughout the rest of his life he seemed, amid many distractions of spirit, to be ever seeking to regain.

And a certain vague fear of evil, constitutional in him, enhanced still further this sentiment of home as a place of tried security. His religion, that old Italian religion, in contrast with the really light-hearted religion of Greece, had its deep undercurrent of gloom, its sad, haunting imageries, not exclusively confined to the walls

of Etruscan tombs. The function of the conscience, not always as the prompter of gratitude for benefits received, but oftenest as his accuser before those angry heavenly masters, had a large part in it; and the sense of some unexplored evil, ever dogging his footsteps, made him oddly suspicious of particular places and persons. Though his liking for animals was so strong, yet one fierce day in early summer, as he walked along a narrow road, he had seen the snakes breeding, and ever afterwards avoided that place and its ugly associations, for there was something in the incident which made food distasteful and his sleep uneasy for many days afterwards. The memory of it however had almost passed away, when at the corner of a street in Pisa, he came upon an African showman exhibiting a great serpent: once more, as the reptile writhed, the former painful impression revived: it was like a peep into the lower side of the real world, and again for many days took all sweetness from food and sleep. He wondered at himself indeed, trying to puzzle out the secret of that repugnance, having no particular dread of a snake's bite, like one of his companions, who had put his hand into the mouth of an old garden-god and roused there a sluggish viper. A kind of pity even mingled with his aversion, and he could hardly have killed or injured the animals, which seemed already to suffer by the very circumstance of their life, being what they

were. It was something like a fear of the supernatural, or perhaps rather a moral feeling, for the face of a great serpent, with no grace of fur or feathers, so different from quadruped or bird, has a sort of humanity of aspect in its spotted and clouded nakedness. There was a humanity, dusty and sordid and as if far gone in corruption, in the sluggish coil, as it awoke suddenly into one metallic spring of pure enmity against him. Long afterwards, when it happened that at Rome he saw, a second time, a showman with his serpents, he remembered the night which had then followed, thinking, in Saint Augustine's vein, on the real greatness of those little troubles of children, of which older people make light ; but with a sudden gratitude also, as he reflected how richly possessed his life had actually been by beautiful aspects and imageries, seeing how greatly what was repugnant to the eye disturbed his peace.

Thus the boyhood of Marius passed ; on the whole, more given to contemplation than to action. Less prosperous in fortune than at an earlier day there had been reason to expect, and animating his solitude, as he read eagerly and intelligently, with the traditions of the past, already he lived much in the realm of the imagination, and became betimes, as he was to continue all through life, something of an idealist, constructing the world for himself in great measure from within, by the exercise

of meditative power. A vein of subjective philosophy, with the individual for its standard of all things, there would be always in his intellectual scheme of the world and of conduct, with a certain incapacity wholly to accept other men's valuations. And the generation of this peculiar element in his temper he could trace up to the days when his life had been so like the reading of a romance to him. Had the Romans a word for *unworldly?* The beautiful word *umbratilis* perhaps comes nearest to it; and, with that precise sense, might describe the spirit in which he prepared himself for the sacerdotal function hereditary in his family — the sort of mystic enjoyment he had in the abstinence, the strenuous self-control and *ascêsis*, which such preparation involved. Like the young Ion in the beautiful opening of the play of Euripides, who every morning sweeps the temple floor with such a fund of cheerfulness in his service, he was apt to be happy in sacred places, with a susceptibility to their peculiar influences which he never outgrew; so that often in after-times, quite unexpectedly, this feeling would revive in him with undiminished freshness. That first, early, boyish ideal of priesthood, the sense of dedication, survived through all the distractions of the world, and when all thought of such vocation had finally passed from him, as a ministry, in spirit at least, towards a sort of hieratic beauty and order in the conduct of life.

And now what relieved in part this over-tension of soul was the lad's pleasure in the country and the open air ; above all, the ramble to the coast, over the marsh with its dwarf roses and wild lavender, and delightful signs, one after another—the abandoned boat, the ruined flood-gates, the flock of wild birds — that one was approaching the sea ; the long summer-day of idleness among its vague scents and sounds. And it was characteristic of him that he relished especially the grave, subdued, northern notes in all that—the charm of the French or English notes, as we might term them—in the luxuriant Italian landscape.

CHAPTER III

CHANGE OF AIR

Dilexi decorem domus tuæ.

THAT almost morbid religious idealism, and his healthful love of the country, were both alike developed by the circumstances of a journey, which happened about this time, when Marius was taken to a certain temple of Aesculapius, among the hills of Etruria, as was then usual in such cases, for the cure of some boyish sickness. The religion of Aesculapius, though borrowed from Greece, had been naturalised in Rome in the old republican times ; but had reached under the Antonines the height of its popularity throughout the Roman world. That was an age of valetudinarians, in many instances of imaginary ones ; but below its various crazes concerning health and disease, largely multiplied a few years after the time of which I am speaking by the miseries of a great pestilence, lay a valuable, because partly practicable, belief that all the maladies of the soul might be reached through the subtle gateways of the body.

Salus, salvation, for the Romans, had come to mean bodily sanity. The religion of the god of bodily health, *Salvator*, as they called him absolutely, had a chance just then of becoming the one religion ; that mild and philanthropic son of Apollo surviving, or absorbing, all other pagan godhead. The apparatus of the medical art, the salutary mineral or herb, diet or abstinence, and all the varieties of the bath, came to have a kind of sacramental character, so deep was the feeling, in more serious minds, of a moral or spiritual profit in physical health, beyond the obvious bodily advantages one had of it ; the body becoming truly, in that case, but a quiet handmaid of the soul. The priesthood or "family" of Aesculapius, a vast college, believed to be in possession of certain precious medical secrets, came nearest perhaps, of all the institutions of the pagan world, to the Christian priesthood ; the temples of the god, rich in some instances with the accumulated thank-offerings of centuries of a tasteful devotion, being really also a kind of hospitals for the sick, administered in a full conviction of the religiousness, the refined and sacred happiness, of a life spent in the relieving of pain.

Elements of a really experimental and progressive knowledge there were doubtless amid this devout enthusiasm, bent so faithfully on the reception of health as a direct gift from God ; but for the most part his care was held to take

effect through a machinery easily capable of misuse for purposes of religious fraud. Through dreams, above all, inspired by Aesculapius himself, information as to the cause and cure of a malady was supposed to come to the sufferer, in a belief based on the truth that dreams do sometimes, for those who watch them carefully, give many hints concerning the conditions of the body—those latent weak points at which disease or death may most easily break into it. In the time of Marcus Aurelius these medical dreams had become more than ever a fashionable caprice. Aristeides, the "Orator," a man of undoubted intellectual power, has devoted six discourses to their interpretation; the really scientific Galen has recorded how beneficently they had intervened in his own case, at certain turning-points of life; and a belief in them was one of the frailties of the wise emperor himself. Partly for the sake of these dreams, living ministers of the god, more likely to come to one in his actual dwelling-place than elsewhere, it was almost a necessity that the patient should sleep one or more nights within the precincts of a temple consecrated to his service, during which time he must observe certain rules prescribed by the priests.

For this purpose, after devoutly saluting the *Lares*, as was customary before starting on a journey, Marius set forth one summer morning on his way to the famous temple which lay

among the hills beyond the valley of the Arnus. It was his greatest adventure hitherto; and he had much pleasure in all its details, in spite of his feverishness. Starting early, under the guidance of an old serving-man who drove the mules, with his wife who took all that was needful for their refreshment on the way and for the offering at the shrine, they went, under the genial heat, halting now and then to pluck certain flowers seen for the first time on these high places, upwards, through a long day of sunshine, while cliffs and woods sank gradually below their path. The evening came as they passed along a steep white road with many windings among the pines, and it was night when they reached the temple, the lights of which shone out upon them pausing before the gates of the sacred enclosure, while Marius became alive to a singular purity in the air. A rippling of water about the place was the only thing audible, as they waited till two priestly figures, speaking Greek to one another, admitted them into a large, white-walled and clearly lighted guest-chamber, in which, while he partook of a simple but wholesomely prepared supper, Marius still seemed to feel pleasantly the height they had attained to among the hills.

The agreeable sense of all this was spoiled by one thing only, his old fear of serpents; for it was under the form of a serpent that Aescula-

pius had come to Rome, and the last definite thought of his weary head before he fell asleep had been a dread either that the god might appear, as he was said sometimes to do, under this hideous aspect, or perhaps one of those great sallow-hued snakes themselves, kept in the sacred place, as he had also heard was usual.

And after an hour's feverish dreaming he awoke—with a cry, it would seem, for some one had entered the room bearing a light. The footsteps of the youthful figure which approached and sat by his bedside were certainly real. Ever afterwards, when the thought arose in his mind of some unhoped-for but entire relief from distress, like blue sky in a storm at sea, would come back the memory of that gracious countenance which, amid all the kindness of its gaze, had yet a certain air of predominance over him, so that he seemed now for the first time to have found the master of his spirit. It would have been sweet to be the servant of him who now sat beside him speaking.

He caught a lesson from what was then said, still somewhat beyond his years, a lesson in the skilled cultivation of life, of experience, of opportunity, which seemed to be the aim of the young priest's recommendations. The sum of them, through various forgotten intervals of argument, as might really have happened in a

dream, was the precept, repeated many times under slightly varied aspects, of a diligent promotion of the capacity of the eye, inasmuch as in the eye would lie for him the determining influence of life: he was of the number of those who, in the words of a poet who came long after, must be "made perfect by the love of visible beauty." The discourse was conceived from the point of view of a theory Marius found afterwards in Plato's *Phædrus*, which supposes men's spirits susceptible to certain influences, diffused, after the manner of streams or currents, by fair things or persons visibly present — green fields, for instance, or children's faces — into the air around them, acting, in the case of some peculiar natures, like potent material essences, and conforming the seer to themselves as with some cunning physical necessity. This theory,[1] in itself so fantastic, had however determined in a range of methodical suggestions, altogether quaint here and there from their circumstantial minuteness. And throughout, the possibility of some vision, as of a new city coming down "like a bride out of heaven," a vision still indeed, it might seem, a long way off, but to be granted perhaps one day to the eyes thus trained, was presented as the motive of this laboriously practical direction.

"If thou wouldst have all about thee like the colours of some fresh picture, in a clear

[1] Ἡ ἀπορρόη τοῦ καλλοῦς.

light," so the discourse recommenced after a pause, "be temperate in thy religious notions, in love, in wine, in all things, and of a peaceful heart with thy fellows." To keep the eye clear by a sort of exquisite personal alacrity and cleanliness, extending even to his dwelling-place; to discriminate, ever more and more fastidiously, select form and colour in things from what was less select; to meditate much on beautiful visible objects, on objects, more especially, connected with the period of youth—on children at play in the morning, the trees in early spring, on young animals, on the fashions and amusements of young men; to keep ever by him if it were but a single choice flower, a graceful animal or sea-shell, as a token and representative of the whole kingdom of such things; to avoid jealously, in his way through the world, everything repugnant to sight; and, should any circumstance tempt him to a general converse in the range of such objects, to disentangle himself from that circumstance at any cost of place, money, or opportunity; such were in brief outline the duties recognised, the rights demanded, in this new formula of life. And it was delivered with conviction; as if the speaker verily saw into the recesses of the mental and physical being of the listener, while his own expression of perfect temperance had in it a fascinating power—the merely negative element of purity, the mere freedom from taint or flaw, in exercise

as a positive influence. Long afterwards, when Marius read the *Charmides*—that other dialogue of Plato, into which he seems to have expressed the very genius of old Greek temperance—the image of this speaker came back vividly before him, to take the chief part in the conversation.

It was as a weighty sanction of such temperance, in almost visible symbolism (an outward imagery identifying itself with unseen moralities) that the memory of that night's double experience, the dream of the great sallow snake and the utterance of the young priest, always returned to him, and the contrast therein involved made him revolt with unfaltering instinct from the bare thought of an excess in sleep, or diet, or even in matters of taste, still more from any excess of a coarser kind.

When he awoke again, still in the exceeding freshness he had felt on his arrival, and now in full sunlight, it was as if his sickness had really departed with the terror of the night : a confusion had passed from the brain, a painful dryness from his hands. Simply to be alive and there was a delight ; and as he bathed in the fresh water set ready for his use, the air of the room about him seemed like pure gold, the very shadows rich with colour. Summoned at length by one of the white-robed brethren, he went out to walk in the temple garden. At a distance, on either side, his guide pointed out to him the *Houses of Birth and Death*, erected for the recep-

tion respectively of women about to become mothers, and of persons about to die ; neither of those incidents being allowed to defile, as was thought, the actual precincts of the shrine. His visitor of the previous night he saw nowhere again. But among the official ministers of the place there was one, already marked as of great celebrity, whom Marius saw often in later days at Rome, the physician Galen, now about thirty years old. He was standing, the hood partly drawn over his face, beside the holy well, as Marius and his guide approached it.

This famous well or conduit, primary cause of the temple and its surrounding institutions, was supplied by the water of a spring flowing directly out of the rocky foundations of the shrine. From the rim of its basin rose a circle of trim columns to support a cupola of singular lightness and grace, itself full of reflected light from the rippling surface, through which might be traced the wavy figure-work of the marble lining below as the stream of water rushed in. Legend told of a visit of Aesculapius to this place, earlier and happier than his first coming to Rome : an inscription around the cupola recorded it in letters of gold. "Being come unto this place the son of God loved it exceedingly :"—*Huc profectus filius Dei maxime amavit hunc locum ;*—and it was then that that most intimately human of the gods had given men the well, with all its salutary properties. The

element itself when received into the mouth, in consequence of its entire freedom from adhering organic matter, was more like a draught of wonderfully pure air than water; and after tasting, Marius was told many mysterious circumstances concerning it, by one and another of the bystanders :—he who drank often thereof might well think he had tasted of the Homeric *lotus*, so great became his desire to remain always on that spot: carried to other places, it was almost indefinitely conservative of its fine qualities: nay! a few drops of it would amend other water; and it flowed not only with unvarying abundance but with a volume so oddly rhythmical that the well stood always full to the brim, whatever quantity might be drawn from it, seeming to answer with strange alacrity of service to human needs, like a true creature and pupil of the philanthropic god. Certainly the little crowd around seemed to find singular refreshment in gazing on it. The whole place appeared sensibly influenced by the amiable and healthful spirit of the thing. All the objects of the country were there at their freshest. In the great park-like enclosure for the maintenance of the sacred animals offered by the convalescent, grass and trees were allowed to grow with a kind of graceful wildness; otherwise, all was wonderfully nice. And that freshness seemed to have something moral in its influence, as if it acted upon the body and the merely bodily

powers of apprehension, through the intelligence; and to the end of his visit Marius saw no more serpents.

A lad was just then drawing water for ritual uses, and Marius followed him as he returned from the well, more and more impressed by the religiousness of all he saw, on his way through a long cloister or corridor, the walls well-nigh hidden under votive inscriptions recording favours from the son of Apollo, and with a distant fragrance of incense in the air, explained when he turned aside through an open doorway into the temple itself. His heart bounded as the refined and dainty magnificence of the place came upon him suddenly, in the flood of early sunshine, with the ceremonial lights burning here and there, and withal a singular expression of sacred order, a surprising cleanliness and simplicity. Certain priests, men whose countenances bore a deep impression of cultivated mind, each with his little group of assistants, were gliding round silently to perform their morning salutation to the god, raising the closed thumb and finger of the right hand with a kiss in the air, as they came and went on their sacred business, bearing their frankincense and lustral water. Around the walls, at such a level that the worshippers might read, as in a book, the story of the god and his sons, the brotherhood of the *Asclepiadæ*, ran a series of imageries, in low relief, their delicate light and shade being

heightened, here and there, with gold. Fullest of inspired and sacred expression, as if in this place the chisel of the artist had indeed dealt not with marble but with the very breath of feeling and thought, was the scene in which the earliest generation of the sons of Aesculapius were transformed into healing dreams; for "grown now too glorious to abide longer among men, by the aid of their sire they put away their mortal bodies, and came into another country, yet not indeed into Elysium nor into the Islands of the Blest. But being made like to the immortal gods, they began to pass about through the world, changed thus far from their first form that they appear eternally young, as many persons have seen them in many places—ministers and heralds of their father, passing to and fro over the earth, like gliding stars. Which thing is, indeed, the most wonderful concerning them!" And in this scene, as throughout the series, with all its crowded personages, Marius noted on the carved faces the same peculiar union of unction, almost of hilarity, with a certain self-possession and reserve, which was conspicuous in the living ministrants around him.

In the central space, upon a pillar or pedestal, hung, *ex voto*, with the richest personal ornaments, stood the image of Aesculapius himself, surrounded by choice flowering plants. It presented the type, still with something of the

severity of the earlier art of Greece about it, not of an aged and crafty physician, but of a youth, earnest and strong of aspect, carrying an *ampulla* or bottle in one hand, and in the other a traveller's staff, a pilgrim among his pilgrim worshippers; and one of the ministers explained to Marius this pilgrim guise.—One chief source of the master's knowledge of healing had been observation of the remedies resorted to by animals labouring under disease or pain—what leaf or berry the lizard or dormouse lay upon its wounded fellow; to which purpose for long years he had led the life of a wanderer, in wild places. The boy took his place as the last comer, a little way behind the group of worshippers who stood in front of the image. There, with uplifted face, the palms of his two hands raised and open before him, and taught by the priest, he said his collect of thanksgiving and prayer (Aristeides has recorded it at the end of his *Asclepiadæ*) to the Inspired Dreams :—

"O ye children of Apollo! who in time past have stilled the waves of sorrow for many people, lighting up a lamp of safety before those who travel by sea and land, be pleased, in your great condescension, though ye be equal in glory with your elder brethren the Dioscuri, and your lot in immortal youth be as theirs, to accept this prayer, which in sleep and vision ye have inspired. Order it aright, I pray you, according to your loving-kindness to men. Preserve me

from sickness; and endue my body with such a measure of health as may suffice it for the obeying of the spirit, that I may pass my days unhindered and in quietness."

On the last morning of his visit Marius entered the shrine again, and just before his departure the priest, who had been his special director during his stay at the place, lifting a cunningly contrived panel, which formed the back of one of the carved seats, bade him look through. What he saw was like the vision of a new world, by the opening of some unsuspected window in a familiar dwelling-place. He looked out upon a long-drawn valley of singularly cheerful aspect, hidden, by the peculiar conformation of the locality, from all points of observation but this. In a green meadow at the foot of the steep olive-clad rocks below, the novices were taking their exercise. The softly sloping sides of the vale lay alike in full sunlight; and its distant opening was closed by a beautifully formed mountain, from which the last wreaths of morning mist were rising under the heat. It might have seemed the very presentment of a land of hope, its hollows brimful of a shadow of blue flowers; and lo! on the one level space of the horizon, in a long dark line, were towers and a dome: and that was Pisa.—Or Rome, was it? asked Marius, ready to believe the utmost, in his excitement.

All this served, as he understood afterwards

in retrospect, at once to strengthen and to purify a certain vein of character in him. Developing the ideal, pre-existent there, of a religious beauty, associated for the future with the exquisite splendour of the temple of Aesculapius, as it dawned upon him on that morning of his first visit—it developed that ideal in connexion with a vivid sense of the value of mental and bodily sanity. And this recognition of the beauty, even for the æsthetic sense, of mere bodily health, now acquired, operated afterwards as an influence morally salutary, counteracting the less desirable or hazardous tendencies of some phases of thought, through which he was to pass.

He came home brown with health to find the health of his mother failing ; and about her death, which occurred not long afterwards, there was a circumstance which rested with him as the cruellest touch of all, in an event which for a time seemed to have taken the light out of the sunshine. She died away from home, but sent for him at the last, with a painful effort on her part, but to his great gratitude, pondering, as he always believed, that he might chance otherwise to look back all his life long upon a single fault with something like remorse, and find the burden a great one. For it happened that, through some sudden, incomprehensible petulance there had been an angry childish gesture, and a slighting word, at the very moment of her departure, actually for the last time. Remembering this

he would ever afterwards pray to be saved from offences against his own affections; the thought of that marred parting having peculiar bitterness for one, who set so much store, both by principle and habit, on the sentiment of home.

CHAPTER IV

THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE

> O mare! O littus! verum secretumque Μουσεῖον,
> quam multa invenitis, quam multa dictatis!
>
> *Pliny's Letters.*

It would hardly have been possible to feel more seriously than did Marius in those grave years of his early life. But the death of his mother turned seriousness of feeling into a matter of the intelligence: it made him a questioner; and, by bringing into full evidence to him the force of his affections and the probable importance of their place in his future, developed in him generally the more human and earthly elements of character. A singularly virile consciousness of the realities of life pronounced itself in him; still however as in the main a poetic apprehension, though united already with something of personal ambition and the instinct of self-assertion. There were days when he could suspect, though it was a suspicion he was careful at first to put from him, that that early, much

cherished religion of the villa might come to count with him as but one form of poetic beauty, or of the ideal, in things; as but one voice, in a world where there were many voices it would be a moral weakness not to listen to. And yet this voice, through its forcible pre-occupation of his childish conscience, still seemed to make a claim of a quite exclusive character, defining itself as essentially one of but two possible leaders of his spirit, the other proposing to him unlimited self-expansion in a world of various sunshine. The contrast was so pronounced as to make the easy, light-hearted, unsuspecting exercise of himself, among the temptations of the new phase of life which had now begun, seem nothing less than a rival *religion*, a rival *religious* service. The temptations, the various sunshine, were those of the old town of Pisa, where Marius was now a tall schoolboy. Pisa was a place lying just far enough from home to make his rare visits to it in childhood seem like adventures, such as had never failed to supply new and refreshing impulses to the imagination. The partly decayed pensive town, which still had its commerce by sea, and its fashion at the bathing-season, had lent, at one time the vivid memory of its fair streets of marble, at another the solemn outline of the dark hills of Luna on its background, at another the living glances of its men and women, to the thickly gathering crowd

of impressions, out of which his notion of the world was then forming. And while he learned that the object, the experience, as it will be known to memory, is really from first to last the chief point for consideration in the conduct of life, these things were feeding also the idealism constitutional with him—his innate and habitual longing for a world altogether fairer than that he saw. The child could find his way in thought along those streets of the old town, expecting duly the shrines at their corners, and their recurrent intervals of garden-courts, or side-views of distant sea. The great temple of the place, as he could remember it, on turning back once for a last look from an angle of his homeward road, counting its tall gray columns between the blue of the bay and the blue fields of blossoming flax beyond; the harbour and its lights; the foreign ships lying there; the sailors' chapel of Venus, and her gilded image, hung with votive gifts; the seamen themselves, their women and children, who had a whole peculiar colour-world of their own—the boy's superficial delight in the broad light and shadow of all that was mingled with the sense of power, of unknown distance, of the danger of storm and possible death.

To this place, then, Marius came down now from *White-nights*, to live in the house of his guardian or tutor, that he might attend the school of a famous rhetorician, and learn, among

other things, Greek. The school, one of many imitations of Plato's Academy in the old Athenian garden, lay in a quiet suburb of Pisa, and had its grove of cypresses, its porticoes, a house for the master, its chapel and images. For the memory of Marius in after-days, a clear morning sunlight seemed to lie perpetually on that severe picture in old gray and green. The lad went to this school daily betimes, in state at first, with a young slave to carry the books, and certainly with no reluctance, for the sight of his fellow-scholars, and their petulant activity, coming upon the sadder sentimental moods of his childhood, awoke at once that instinct of emulation which is but the other side of sympathy; and he was not aware, of course, how completely the difference of his previous training had made him, even in his most enthusiastic participation in the ways of that little world, still essentially but a spectator. While all their heart was in their limited boyish race, and its transitory prizes, he was already entertaining himself, very pleasurably meditative, with the tiny drama in action before him, as but the mimic, preliminary exercise for a larger contest, and already with an implicit epicureanism. Watching all the gallant effects of their small rivalries—a scene in the main of fresh delightful sunshine—he entered at once into the sensations of a rivalry beyond them, into the passion of men, and had already recognised a certain

appetite for fame, for distinction among his fellows, as his dominant motive to be.

The fame he conceived for himself at this time was, as the reader will have anticipated, of the intellectual order, that of a poet perhaps. And as, in that gray monastic tranquillity of the villa, inward voices from the reality of unseen things had come abundantly ; so here, with the sounds and aspects of the shore, and amid the urbanities, the graceful follies, of a bathing-place, it was the reality, the tyrannous reality, of things visible that was borne in upon him. The real world around — a present humanity not less comely, it might seem, than that of the old heroic days—endowing everything it touched upon, however remotely, down to its little passing tricks of fashion even, with a kind of fleeting beauty, exercised over him just then a great fascination.

That sense had come upon him in all its power one exceptionally fine summer, the summer when, at a somewhat earlier age than was usual, he had formally assumed the dress of manhood, going into the Forum for that purpose, accompanied by his friends in festal array. At night, after the full measure of those cloudless days, he would feel well-nigh wearied out, as if with a long succession of pictures and music. As he wandered through the gay streets or on the sea-shore, the real world seemed indeed boundless, and himself almost absolutely free in it, with a boundless

appetite for experience, for adventure, whether physical or of the spirit. His entire rearing hitherto had lent itself to an imaginative exaltation of the past; but now the spectacle actually afforded to his untired and freely open senses, suggested the reflection that the present had, it might be, really advanced beyond the past, and he was ready to boast in the very fact that it was modern. If, in a voluntary archaism, the polite world of that day went back to a choicer generation, as it fancied, for the purpose of a fastidious self-correction, in matters of art, of literature, and even, as we have seen, of religion, at least it improved, by a shade or two of more scrupulous finish, on the old pattern; and the new era, like the *Neu-zeit* of the German enthusiasts at the beginning of our own century, might perhaps be discerned, awaiting one just a single step onward —the perfected new manner, in the consummation of time, alike as regards the things of the imagination and the actual conduct of life. Only, while the pursuit of an ideal like this demanded entire liberty of heart and brain, that old, staid, conservative religion of his childhood certainly had its being in a world of somewhat narrow restrictions. But then, the one was absolutely real, with nothing less than the reality of seeing and hearing—the other, how vague, shadowy, problematical! Could its so limited probabilities be worth taking into account in any practical question as to the rejecting or receiving

of what was indeed so real, and, on the face of it, so desirable?

And, dating from the time of his first coming to school, a great friendship had grown up for him, in that life of so few attachments — the pure and disinterested friendship of schoolmates. He had seen Flavian for the first time the day on which he had come to Pisa, at the moment when his mind was full of wistful thoughts regarding the new life to begin for him to-morrow, and he gazed curiously at the crowd of bustling scholars as they came from their classes. There was something in Flavian a shade disdainful, as he stood isolated from the others for a moment, explained in part by his stature and the distinction of the low, broad forehead; though there was pleasantness also for the new-comer in the roving blue eyes which seemed somehow to take a fuller hold upon things around than is usual with boys. Marius knew that those proud glances made kindly note of him for a moment, and felt something like friendship at first sight. There was a tone of reserve or gravity there, amid perfectly disciplined health, which, to his fancy, seemed to carry forward the expression of the austere sky and the clear song of the blackbird on that gray March evening. Flavian indeed was a creature who changed much with the changes of the passing light and shade about him, and was brilliant enough under the early sunshine in

school next morning. Of all that little world of more or less gifted youth, surely the centre was this lad of servile birth. Prince of the school, he had gained an easy dominion over the old Greek master by the fascination of his parts, and over his fellow-scholars by the figure he bore. He wore already the manly dress; and standing there in class, as he displayed his wonderful quickness in reckoning, or his taste in declaiming Homer, he was like a carved figure in motion, thought Marius. but with that indescribable gleam upon it which the words of Homer actually suggested, as perceptible on the visible forms of the gods—

οἷα θεοὺς ἐπενήνοθεν αἰὲν ἐόντας.

A story hung by him, a story which his comrades acutely connected with his habitual air of somewhat peevish pride. Two points were held to be clear amid its general vagueness—a rich stranger paid his schooling, and he was himself very poor, though there was an attractive piquancy in the poverty of Flavian which in a scholar of another figure might have been despised. Over Marius too his dominion was entire. Three years older than he, Flavian was appointed to help the younger boy in his studies, and Marius thus became virtually his servant in many things, taking his humours with a sort of grateful pride in being noticed at all, and, thinking over all this afterwards, found that the

fascination experienced by him had been a sentimental one, dependent on the concession to himself of an intimacy, a certain tolerance of his company, granted to none beside.

That was in the earliest days; and then, as their intimacy grew, the genius, the intellectual power of Flavian began its sway over him. The brilliant youth who loved dress, and dainty food, and flowers, and seemed to have a natural alliance with, and claim upon, everything else which was physically select and bright, cultivated also that foppery of words, of choice diction, which was common among the *élite* spirits of that day; and Marius, early an expert and elegant penman, transcribed his verses (the euphuism of which, amid a genuine original power, was then so delightful to him) in beautiful ink, receiving in return the profit of Flavian's really great intellectual capacities, developed and accomplished under the ambitious desire to make his way effectively in life. Among other things he introduced him to the writings of a sprightly wit, then very busy with the pen, one Lucian—writings seeming to overflow with that intellectual light turned upon dim places, which, at least in seasons of mental fair weather, can make people laugh where they have been wont, perhaps, to pray. And, surely, the sunlight which filled those well-remembered early mornings in school, had had more than the usual measure of gold in it!

Marius, at least, would lie awake before the time, thinking with delight of the long coming hours of hard work in the presence of Flavian, as other boys dream of a holiday.

It was almost by accident at last, so wayward and capricious was he, that reserve gave way, and Flavian told the story of his father — a freedman, presented late in life, and almost against his will, with the liberty so fondly desired in youth, but on condition of the sacrifice of part of his *peculium* — the slave's diminutive hoard — amassed by many a self-denial, in an existence necessarily hard. The rich man, interested in the promise of the fair child born on his estate, had sent him to school. The meanness and dejection, nevertheless, of that unoccupied old age defined the leading memory of Flavian, revived sometimes, after this first confidence, with a burst of angry tears amid the sunshine. But nature had had her economy in nursing the strength of that one natural affection; for, save his half-selfish care for Marius, it was the single, really generous part, the one piety, in the lad's character. In him Marius saw the spirit of unbelief, achieved as if at one step. The much-admired freedman's son, as with the privilege of a natural aristocracy, believed only in himself, in the brilliant, and mainly sensuous gifts, he had, or meant to acquire.

And then, he had certainly yielded himself,

though still with untouched health, in a world where manhood comes early, to the seductions of that luxurious town, and Marius wondered sometimes, in the freer revelation of himself by conversation, at the extent of his early corruption. How often, afterwards, did evil things present themselves in malign association with the memory of that beautiful head, and with a kind of borrowed sanction and charm in its natural grace! To Marius, at a later time, he counted for as it were an epitome of the whole pagan world, the depth of its corruption, and its perfection of form. And still, in his mobility, his animation, in his eager capacity for various life, he was so real an object, after that visionary idealism of the villa. His voice, his glance, were like the breaking in of the solid world upon one, amid the flimsy fictions of a dream. A shadow, handling all things as shadows, had felt a sudden real and poignant heat in them.

Meantime, under his guidance, Marius was learning quickly and abundantly, because with a good will. There was that in the actual effectiveness of his figure which stimulated the younger lad to make the most of opportunity; and he had experience already that education largely increased one's capacity for enjoyment. He was acquiring what it is the chief function of all higher education to impart, the art, namely, of so relieving the ideal or poetic traits,

the elements of distinction, in our everyday life —of so exclusively living in them—that the unadorned remainder of it, the mere drift or *débris* of our days, comes to be as though it were not. And the consciousness of this aim came with the reading of one particular book, then fresh in the world, with which he fell in about this time—a book which awakened the poetic or romantic capacity as perhaps some other book might have done, but was peculiar in giving it a direction emphatically sensuous. It made him, in that visionary reception of every-day life, the seer, more especially, of a revelation in colour and form. If our modern education, in its better efforts, really conveys to any of us that kind of idealising power, it does so (though dealing mainly, as its professed instruments, with the most select and ideal remains of ancient literature) oftenest by truant reading; and thus it happened also, long ago, with Marius and his friend.

CHAPTER V

THE GOLDEN BOOK

THE two lads were lounging together over a book, half-buried in a heap of dry corn, in an old granary—the quiet corner to which they had climbed out of the way of their noisier companions on one of their blandest holiday afternoons. They looked round: the western sun smote through the broad chinks of the shutters. How like a picture! and it was precisely the scene described in what they were reading, with just that added poetic touch in the book which made it delightful and select, and, in the actual place, the ray of sunlight transforming the rough grain among the cool brown shadows into heaps of gold. What they were intent on was, indeed, the book of books, the "golden" book of that day, a gift to Flavian, as was shown by the purple writing on the handsome yellow wrapper, following the title *Flaviane!*—it said,

Flaviane!
lege
Feliciter!

Flaviane!
Vivas!
Floreas!

Flaviane!
Vivas!
Gaudeas!

It was perfumed with oil of sandal-wood, and decorated with carved and gilt ivory bosses at the ends of the roller.

And the inside was something not less dainty and fine, full of the archaisms and curious felicities in which that generation delighted, quaint terms and images picked fresh from the early dramatists, the lifelike phrases of some lost poet preserved by an old grammarian, racy morsels of the vernacular and studied prettinesses: —all alike, mere playthings for the genuine power and natural eloquence of the erudite artist, unsuppressed by his erudition, which, however, made some people angry, chiefly less well "got-up" people, and especially those who were untidy from indolence.

No! it was certainly not that old-fashioned, unconscious ease of the early literature, which could never come again; which, after all, had had more in common with the "infinite patience" of Apuleius than with the hack-work readiness of his detractors, who might so well have been "self-conscious" of going slip-shod. And at least his success was unmistakable as to the precise literary effect he had intended, including a certain tincture of "neology" in expression—*nonnihil interdum elocutione novella parum signatum*—in the language of Cornelius Fronto, the contemporary prince of rhetoricians. What words he had found for conveying, with a single touch, the sense of textures, colours,

incidents! "Like jewellers' work! Like a myrrhine vase!"—admirers said of his writing. "The golden fibre in the hair, the gold thread-work in the gown marked her as the mistress" —*aurum in comis et in tunicis, ibi inflexum hic intextum, matronam profecto confitebatur*—he writes, with his "curious felicity," of one of his heroines. *Aurum intextum*: gold fibre:—well! there was something of that kind in his own work. And then, in an age when people, from the emperor Aurelius downwards, prided themselves unwisely on writing in Greek, he had written for Latin people in their own tongue; though still, in truth, with all the care of a learned language. Not less happily inventive were the incidents recorded—story within story—stories with the sudden, unlooked-for changes of dreams. He had his humorous touches also. And what went to the ordinary boyish taste, in those somewhat peculiar readers, what would have charmed boys more purely boyish, was the adventure:—the bear loose in the house at night, the wolves storming the farms in winter, the exploits of the robbers, their charming caves, the delightful thrill one had at the question—"Don't you know that these roads are infested by robbers?"

The scene of the romance was laid in Thessaly, the original land of witchcraft, and took one up and down its mountains, and into its old weird towns, haunts of magic and

incantation, where all the more genuine appliances of the black art, left behind her by Medea when she fled through that country, were still in use. In the city of Hypata, indeed, nothing seemed to be its true self.—"You might think that through the murmuring of some cadaverous spell, all things had been changed into forms not their own; that there was humanity in the hardness of the stones you stumbled on; that the birds you heard singing were feathered men; that the trees around the walls drew their leaves from a like source. The statues seemed about to move, the walls to speak, the dumb cattle to break out in prophecy; nay! the very sky and the sunbeams, as if they might suddenly cry out." Witches are there who can draw down the moon, or at least the lunar *virus* —that white fluid she sheds, to be found, so rarely, "on high, heathy places: which is a poison. A touch of it will drive men mad."

And in one very remote village lives the sorceress Pamphile, who turns her neighbours into various animals. What true humour in the scene where, after mounting the rickety stairs, Lucius, peeping curiously through a chink in the door, is a spectator of the transformation of the old witch herself into a bird, that she may take flight to the object of her affections—into an owl! "First she stripped off every rag she had. Then opening a certain chest she took from it many small boxes, and removing the lid

of one of them, rubbed herself over for a long time, from head to foot, with an ointment it contained, and after much low muttering to her lamp, began to jerk at last and shake her limbs. And as her limbs moved to and fro, out burst the soft feathers: stout wings came forth to view: the nose grew hard and hooked: her nails were crooked into claws; and Pamphile was an owl. She uttered a queasy screech; and, leaping little by little from the ground, making trial of herself, fled presently, on full wing, out of doors."

By clumsy imitation of this process, Lucius, the hero of the romance, transforms himself, not as he had intended into a showy winged creature, but into the animal which has given name to the book; for throughout it there runs a vein of racy, homely satire on the love of magic then prevalent, curiosity concerning which had led Lucius to meddle with the old woman's appliances. "Be you my Venus," he says to the pretty maid-servant who has introduced him to the view of Pamphile, "and let me stand by you a winged Cupid!" and, freely applying the magic ointment, sees himself transformed, "not into a bird, but into an ass!"

Well! the proper remedy for his distress is a supper of roses, could such be found, and many are his quaintly picturesque attempts to come by them at that adverse season; as he contrives to do at last, when, the grotesque procession of Isis

passing by with a bear and other strange animals in its train, the ass following along with the rest suddenly crunches the chaplet of roses carried in the High-priest's hand.

Meantime, however, he must wait for the spring, with more than the outside of an ass; "though I was not so much a fool, nor so truly an ass," he tells us, when he happens to be left alone with a daintily spread table, "as to neglect this most delicious fare, and feed upon coarse hay." For, in truth, all through the book, there is an unmistakably real feeling for asses, with bold touches like Swift's, and a genuine animal breadth. Lucius was the original ass, who peeping slily from the window of his hiding-place forgot all about the big shade he cast just above him, and gave occasion to the joke or proverb about "the peeping ass and his shadow."

But the marvellous, delight in which is one of the really serious elements in most boys, passed at times, those young readers still feeling its fascination, into what French writers call the *macabre*—that species of almost insane pre-occupation with the materialities of our moulder-ing flesh, that luxury of disgust in gazing on corruption, which was connected, in this writer at least, with not a little obvious coarseness. It was a strange notion of the gross lust of the actual world, that Marius took from some of these episodes. "I am told," they read, "that

when foreigners are interred, the old witches are in the habit of out-racing the funeral procession, to ravage the corpse"—in order to obtain certain cuttings and remnants from it, with which to injure the living—"especially if the witch has happened to cast her eye upon some goodly young man." And the scene of the night-watching of a dead body lest the witches should come to tear off the flesh with their teeth, is worthy of Théophile Gautier.

But set as one of the episodes in the main narrative, a true gem amid its mockeries, its coarse though genuine humanity, its burlesque horrors, came the tale of Cupid and Psyche, full of brilliant, life-like situations, *speciosa locis*, and abounding in lovely visible imagery (one seemed to see and handle the golden hair, the fresh flowers, the precious works of art in it !) yet full also of a gentle idealism, so that you might take it, if you chose, for an allegory. With a concentration of all his finer literary gifts, Apuleius had gathered into it the floating star-matter of many a delightful old story.—

The Story of Cupid and Psyche.

In a certain city lived a king and queen who had three daughters exceeding fair. But the beauty of the elder sisters, though pleasant to behold, yet passed not the measure of human praise, while such was the loveliness of the

youngest that men's speech was too poor to commend it worthily and could express it not at all. Many of the citizens and of strangers, whom the fame of this excellent vision had gathered thither, confounded by that matchless beauty, could but kiss the finger-tips of their right hands at sight of her, as in adoration to the goddess Venus herself. And soon a rumour passed through the country that she whom the blue deep had borne, forbearing her divine dignity, was even then moving among men, or that by some fresh germination from the stars, not the sea now, but the earth, had put forth a new Venus, endued with the flower of virginity.

This belief, with the fame of the maiden's loveliness, went daily further into distant lands, so that many people were drawn together to behold that glorious model of the age. Men sailed no longer to Paphos, to Cnidus or Cythera, to the presence of the goddess Venus : her sacred rites were neglected, her images stood uncrowned, the cold ashes were left to disfigure her forsaken altars. It was to a maiden that men's prayers were offered, to a human countenance they looked, in propitiating so great a godhead : when the girl went forth in the morning they strewed flowers on her way, and the victims proper to that unseen goddess were presented as she passed along. This conveyance of divine worship to a mortal kindled meantime the anger of the true Venus. "Lo! now, the ancient

parent of nature," she cried, "the fountain of all elements! Behold me, Venus, benign mother of the world, sharing my honours with a mortal maiden, while my name, built up in heaven, is profaned by the mean things of earth! Shall a perishable woman bear my image about with her? In vain did the shepherd of Ida prefer me! Yet shall she have little joy, whosoever she be, of her usurped and unlawful loveliness!" Thereupon she called to her that winged, bold boy, of evil ways, who wanders armed by night through men's houses, spoiling their marriages; and stirring yet more by her speech his inborn wantonness, she led him to the city, and showed him Psyche as she walked.

"I pray thee," she said, "give thy mother a full revenge. Let this maid become the slave of an unworthy love." Then, embracing him closely, she departed to the shore and took her throne upon the crest of the wave. And lo! at her unuttered will, her ocean-servants are in waiting: the daughters of Nereus are there singing their song, and Portunus, and Salacia, and the tiny charioteer of the dolphin, with a host of Tritons leaping through the billows. And one blows softly through his sounding sea-shell, another spreads a silken web against the sun, a third presents the mirror to the eyes of his mistress, while the others swim side by side below, drawing her chariot. Such was the escort of Venus as she went upon the sea.

Psyche meantime, aware of her loveliness, had no fruit thereof. All people regarded and admired, but none sought her in marriage. It was but as on the finished work of the craftsman that they gazed upon that divine likeness. Her sisters, less fair than she, were happily wedded. She, even as a widow, sitting at home, wept over her desolation, hating in her heart the beauty in which all men were pleased.

And the king, supposing the gods were angry, inquired of the oracle of Apollo, and Apollo answered him thus : " Let the damsel be placed on the top of a certain mountain, adorned as for the bed of marriage and of death. Look not for a son-in-law of mortal birth ; but for that evil serpent-thing, by reason of whom even the gods tremble and the shadows of Styx are afraid."

So the king returned home and made known the oracle to his wife. For many days she lamented, but at last the fulfilment of the divine precept is urgent upon her, and the company make ready to conduct the maiden to her deadly bridal. And now the nuptial torch gathers dark smoke and ashes : the pleasant sound of the pipe is changed into a cry : the marriage hymn concludes in a sorrowful wailing : below her yellow wedding-veil the bride shook away her tears ; insomuch that the whole city was afflicted together at the ill-luck of the stricken house.

But the mandate of the god impelled the hapless Psyche to her fate, and, these solemnities

being ended, the funeral of the living soul goes forth, all the people following. Psyche, bitterly weeping, assists not at her marriage but at her own obsequies, and while the parents hesitate to accomplish a thing so unholy the daughter cries to them: "Wherefore torment your luckless age by long weeping? This was the prize of my extraordinary beauty! When all people celebrated us with divine honours, and in one voice named the New Venus, it was then ye should have wept for me as one dead. Now at last I understand that that one name of Venus has been my ruin. Lead me and set me upon the appointed place. I am in haste to submit to that well-omened marriage, to behold that goodly spouse. Why delay the coming of him who was born for the destruction of the whole world?"

She was silent, and with firm step went on the way. And they proceeded to the appointed place on a steep mountain, and left there the maiden alone, and took their way homewards dejectedly. The wretched parents, in their close-shut house, yielded themselves to perpetual night; while to Psyche, fearful and trembling and weeping sore upon the mountain-top, comes the gentle Zephyrus. He lifts her mildly, and, with vesture afloat on either side, bears her by his own soft breathing over the windings of the hills, and sets her lightly among the flowers in the bosom of a valley below.

Psyche, in those delicate grassy places, lying

sweetly on her dewy bed, rested from the agitation of her soul and arose in peace. And lo ! a grove of mighty trees, with a fount of water, clear as glass, in the midst ; and hard by the water, a dwelling-place, built not by human hands but by some divine cunning. One recognised, even at the entering, the delightful hostelry of a god. Golden pillars sustained the roof, arched most curiously in cedar-wood and ivory. The walls were hidden under wrought silver :— all tame and woodland creatures leaping forward to the visitor's gaze. Wonderful indeed was the craftsman, divine or half-divine, who by the subtlety of his art had breathed so wild a soul into the silver ! The very pavement was distinct with pictures in goodly stones. In the glow of its precious metal the house is its own daylight, having no need of the sun. Well might it seem a place fashioned for the conversation of gods with men !

Psyche, drawn forward by the delight of it, came near, and, her courage growing, stood within the doorway. One by one, she admired the beautiful things she saw ; and, most wonderful of all ! no lock, no chain, nor living guardian protected that great treasure house. But as she gazed there came a voice—a voice, as it were unclothed of bodily vesture—" Mistress ! " it said, " all these things are thine. Lie down, and relieve thy weariness, and rise again for the bath when thou wilt. We thy servants, whose

voice thou hearest, will be beforehand with our service, and a royal feast shall be ready."

And Psyche understood that some divine care was providing, and, refreshed with sleep and the Bath, sat down to the feast. Still she saw no one: only she heard words falling here and there, and had voices alone to serve her. And the feast being ended, one entered the chamber and sang to her unseen, while another struck the chords of a harp, invisible with him who played on it. Afterwards the sound of a company singing together came to her, but still so that none were present to sight; yet it appeared that a great multitude of singers was there.

And the hour of evening inviting her, she climbed into the bed; and as the night was far advanced, behold a sound of a certain clemency approaches her. Then, fearing for her maidenhood in so great solitude, she trembled, and more than any evil she knew dreaded that she knew not. And now the husband, that unknown husband, drew near, and ascended the couch, and made her his wife; and lo! before the rise of dawn he had departed hastily. And the attendant voices ministered to the needs of the newly married. And so it happened with her for a long season. And as nature has willed, this new thing, by continual use, became a delight to her: the sound of the voice grew to be her solace in that condition of loneliness and uncertainty.

One night the bridegroom spoke thus to his beloved, "O Psyche, most pleasant bride! Fortune is grown stern with us, and threatens thee with mortal peril. Thy sisters, troubled at the report of thy death and seeking some trace of thee, will come to the mountain's top. But if by chance their cries reach thee, answer not, neither look forth at all, lest thou bring sorrow upon me and destruction upon thyself." Then Psyche promised that she would do according to his will. But the bridegroom was fled away again with the night. And all that day she spent in tears, repeating that she was now dead indeed, shut up in that golden prison, powerless to console her sisters sorrowing after her, or to see their faces; and so went to rest weeping.

And after a while came the bridegroom again, and lay down beside her, and embracing her as she wept, complained, "Was this thy promise, my Psyche? What have I to hope from thee? Even in the arms of thy husband thou ceasest not from pain. Do now as thou wilt. Indulge thine own desire, though it seeks what will ruin thee. Yet wilt thou remember my warning, repentant too late." Then, protesting that she is like to die, she obtains from him that he suffer her to see her sisters, and present to them moreover what gifts she would of golden ornaments; but therewith he ofttimes advised her never at any time, yielding to pernicious counsel, to enquire concerning his bodily form, lest she fall,

through unholy curiosity, from so great a height of fortune, nor feel ever his embrace again. "I would die a hundred times," she said, cheerful at last, "rather than be deprived of thy most sweet usage. I love thee as my own soul, beyond comparison even with Love himself. Only bid thy servant Zephyrus bring hither my sisters, as he brought me. My honeycomb! My husband! Thy Psyche's breath of life!" So he promised; and after the embraces of the night, ere the light appeared, vanished from the hands of his bride.

And the sisters, coming to the place where Psyche was abandoned, wept loudly among the rocks, and called upon her by name, so that the sound came down to her, and running out of the palace distraught, she cried, "Wherefore afflict your souls with lamentation? I whom you mourn am here." Then, summoning Zephyrus, she reminded him of her husband's bidding; and he bare them down with a gentle blast. "Enter now," she said, "into my house, and relieve your sorrow in the company of Psyche your sister."

And Psyche displayed to them all the treasures of the golden house, and its great family of ministering voices, nursing in them the malice which was already at their hearts. And at last one of them asks curiously who the lord of that celestial array may be, and what manner of man her husband? And Psyche

answered dissemblingly, "A young man, handsome and mannerly, with a goodly beard. For the most part he hunts upon the mountains." And lest the secret should slip from her in the way of further speech, loading her sisters with gold and gems, she commanded Zephyrus to bear them away.

And they returned home, on fire with envy. "See now the injustice of fortune!" cried one. "We, the elder children, are given like servants to be the wives of strangers, while the youngest is possessed of so great riches, who scarcely knows how to use them. You saw, Sister! what a hoard of wealth lies in the house; what glittering gowns; what splendour of precious gems, besides all that gold trodden under foot. If she indeed hath, as she said, a bridegroom so goodly, then no one in all the world is happier. And it may be that this husband, being of divine nature, will make her too a goddess. Nay! so in truth it is. It was even thus she bore herself. Already she looks aloft and breathes divinity, who, though but a woman, has voices for her handmaidens, and can command the winds." "Think," answered the other, "how arrogantly she dealt with us, grudging us these trifling gifts out of all that store, and when our company became a burden, causing us to be hissed and driven away from her through the air! But I am no woman if she keep her hold on this great fortune; and if the insult done us has touched

thee too, take we counsel together. Meanwhile let us hold our peace, and know naught of her, alive or dead. For they are not truly happy of whose happiness other folk are unaware."

And the bridegroom, whom still she knows not, warns her thus a second time, as he talks with her by night: "Seest thou what peril besets thee? Those cunning wolves have made ready for thee their snares, of which the sum is that they persuade thee to search into the fashion of my countenance, the seeing of which, as I have told thee often, will be the seeing of it no more for ever. But do thou neither listen nor make answer to aught regarding thy husband. Besides, we have sown also the seed of our race. Even now this bosom grows with a child to be born to us, a child, if thou but keep our secret, of divine quality; if thou profane it, subject to death." And Psyche was glad at the tidings, rejoicing in that solace of a divine seed, and in the glory of that pledge of love to be, and the dignity of the name of mother. Anxiously she notes the increase of the days, the waning months. And again, as he tarries briefly beside her, the bridegroom repeats his warning: "Even now the sword is drawn with which thy sisters seek thy life. Have pity on thyself, sweet wife, and upon our child, and see not those evil women again." But the sisters make their way into the palace once more, crying to her in

wily tones, "O Psyche! and thou too wilt be a mother! How great will be the joy at home! Happy indeed shall we be to have the nursing of the golden child. Truly if he be answerable to the beauty of his parents, it will be a birth of Cupid himself."

So, little by little, they stole upon the heart of their sister. She, meanwhile, bids the lyre to sound for their delight, and the playing is heard: she bids the pipes to move, the quire to sing, and the music and the singing come invisibly, soothing the mind of the listener with sweetest modulation. Yet not even thereby was their malice put to sleep: once more they seek to know what manner of husband she has, and whence that seed. And Psyche, simple overmuch, forgetful of her first story, answers, "My husband comes from a far country, trading for great sums. He is already of middle age, with whitening locks." And therewith she dismisses them again.

And returning home upon the soft breath of Zephyrus one cried to the other, "What shall be said of so ugly a lie? He who was a young man with goodly beard is now in middle life. It must be that she told a false tale: else is she in very truth ignorant what manner of man he is. Howsoever it be, let us destroy her quickly. For if she indeed knows not, be sure that her bridegroom is one of the gods: it is a god she bears in her womb. And let

that be far from us! If she be called mother of a god, then will life be more than I can bear."

So, full of rage against her, they returned to Psyche, and said to her craftily, "Thou livest in an ignorant bliss, all incurious of thy real danger. It is a deadly serpent, as we certainly know, that comes to sleep at thy side. Remember the words of the oracle, which declared thee destined to a cruel beast. There are those who have seen it at nightfall, coming back from its feeding. In no long time, they say, it will end its blandishments. It but waits for the babe to be formed in thee, that it may devour thee by so much the richer. If indeed the solitude of this musical place, or it may be the loathsome commerce of a hidden love, delight thee, we at least in sisterly piety have done our part." And at last the unhappy Psyche, simple and frail of soul, carried away by the terror of their words, losing memory of her husband's precepts and her own promise, brought upon herself a great calamity. Trembling and turning pale, she answers them, "And they who tell those things, it may be, speak the truth. For in very deed never have I seen the face of my husband, nor know I at all what manner of man he is. Always he frights me diligently from the sight of him, threatening some great evil should I too curiously look upon his face. Do ye, if ye can help your sister in her great peril, stand by her now."

Her sisters answered her, "The way of safety we have well considered, and will teach thee. Take a sharp knife, and hide it in that part of the couch where thou art wont to lie: take also a lamp filled with oil, and set it privily behind the curtain. And when he shall have drawn up his coils into the accustomed place, and thou hearest him breathe in sleep, slip then from his side and discover the lamp, and, knife in hand, put forth thy strength, and strike off the serpent's head." And so they departed in haste.

And Psyche left alone (alone but for the furies which beset her) is tossed up and down in her distress, like a wave of the sea; and though her will is firm, yet, in the moment of putting hand to the deed, she falters, and is torn asunder by various apprehension of the great calamity upon her. She hastens and anon delays, now full of distrust, and now of angry courage: under one bodily form she loathes the monster and loves the bridegroom. But twilight ushers in the night; and at length in haste she makes ready for the terrible deed. Darkness came, and the bridegroom; and he first, after some faint essay of love, falls into a deep sleep.

And she, erewhile of no strength, the hard purpose of destiny assisting her, is confirmed in force. With lamp plucked forth, knife in hand, she put by her sex; and lo! as the secrets of the bed became manifest, the sweetest and most gentle of all creatures, Love himself, reclined

there, in his own proper loveliness! At sight of him the very flame of the lamp kindled more gladly! But Psyche was afraid at the vision, and, faint of soul, trembled back upon her knees, and would have hidden the steel in her own bosom. But the knife slipped from her hand; and now, undone, yet ofttimes looking upon the beauty of that divine countenance, she lives again. She sees the locks of that golden head, pleasant with the unction of the gods, shed down in graceful entanglement behind and before, about the ruddy cheeks and white throat. The pinions of the winged god, yet fresh with the dew, are spotless upon his shoulders, the delicate plumage wavering over them as they lie at rest. Smooth he was, and, touched with light, worthy of Venus his mother. At the foot of the couch lay his bow and arrows, the instruments of his power, propitious to men.

And Psyche, gazing hungrily thereon, draws an arrow from the quiver, and trying the point upon her thumb, tremulous still, drave in the barb, so that a drop of blood came forth. Thus fell she, by her own act, and unaware, into the love of Love. Falling upon the bridegroom, with indrawn breath, in a hurry of kisses from eager and open lips, she shuddered as she thought how brief that sleep might be. And it chanced that a drop of burning oil fell from the lamp upon the god's shoulder. Ah! maladroit minister of love, thus to wound him from whom

all fire comes; though 'twas a lover, I trow, first devised thee, to have the fruit of his desire even in the darkness! At the touch of the fire the god started up, and beholding the overthrow of her faith, quietly took flight from her embraces.

And Psyche, as he rose upon the wing, laid hold on him with her two hands, hanging upon him in his passage through the air, till she sinks to the earth through weariness. And as she lay there, the divine lover, tarrying still, lighted upon a cypress tree which grew near, and, from the top of it, spake thus to her, in great emotion. "Foolish one! unmindful of the command of Venus, my mother, who had devoted thee to one of base degree, I fled to thee in his stead. Now know I that this was vainly done. Into mine own flesh pierced mine arrow, and I made thee my wife, only that I might seem a monster beside thee—that thou shouldst seek to wound the head wherein lay the eyes so full of love to thee! Again and again, I thought to put thee on thy guard concerning these things, and warned thee in loving-kindness. Now I would but punish thee by my flight hence." And therewith he winged his way into the deep sky.

Psyche, prostrate upon the earth, and following far as sight might reach the flight of the bridegroom, wept and lamented; and when the breadth of space had parted him wholly from her, cast herself down from the bank of a river

which was nigh. But the stream, turning gentle in honour of the god, put her forth again unhurt upon its margin. And as it happened, Pan, the rustic god, was sitting just then by the waterside, embracing, in the body of a reed, the goddess Canna ; teaching her to respond to him in all varieties of slender sound. Hard by, his flock of goats browsed at will. And the shaggy god called her, wounded and outworn, kindly to him and said, "I am but a rustic herdsman, pretty maiden, yet wise, by favour of my great age and long experience ; and if I guess truly by those faltering steps, by thy sorrowful eyes and continual sighing, thou labourest with excess of love. Listen then to me, and seek not death again, in the stream or otherwise. Put aside thy woe, and turn thy prayers to Cupid. He is in truth a delicate youth : win him by the delicacy of thy service."

So the shepherd-god spoke, and Psyche, answering nothing, but with a reverence to his serviceable deity, went on her way. And while she, in her search after Cupid, wandered through many lands, he was lying in the chamber of his mother, heart-sick. And the white bird which floats over the waves plunged in haste into the sea, and approaching Venus, as she bathed, made known to her that her son lies afflicted with some grievous hurt, doubtful of life. And Venus cried, angrily, "My son, then, has a mistress ! And it is Psyche, who witched away

my beauty and was the rival of my godhead, whom he loves!"

Therewith she issued from the sea, and returning to her golden chamber, found there the lad, sick, as she had heard, and cried from the doorway, "Well done, truly! to trample thy mother's precepts under foot, to spare my enemy that cross of an unworthy love; nay, unite her to thyself, child as thou art, that I might have a daughter-in-law who hates me! I will make thee repent of thy sport, and the savour of thy marriage bitter. There is one who shall chasten this body of thine, put out thy torch and unstring thy bow. Not till she has plucked forth that hair, into which so oft these hands have smoothed the golden light, and sheared away thy wings, shall I feel the injury done me avenged." And with this she hastened in anger from the doors.

And Ceres and Juno met her, and sought to know the meaning of her troubled countenance. "Ye come in season," she cried; "I pray you, find for me Psyche. It must needs be that ye have heard the disgrace of my house." And they, ignorant of what was done, would have soothed her anger, saying, "What fault, Mistress, hath thy son committed, that thou wouldst destroy the girl he loves? Knowest thou not that he is now of age? Because he wears his years so lightly must he seem to thee ever but a child? Wilt thou for ever thus pry into the

pastimes of thy son, always accusing his wantonness, and blaming in him those delicate wiles which are all thine own?" Thus, in secret fear of the boy's bow, did they seek to please him with their gracious patronage. But Venus, angry at their light taking of her wrongs, turned her back upon them, and with hasty steps made her way once more to the sea.

Meanwhile Psyche, tost in soul, wandering hither and thither, rested not night or day in the pursuit of her husband, desiring, if she might not sooth his anger by the endearments of a wife, at the least to propitiate him with the prayers of a handmaid. And seeing a certain temple on the top of a high mountain, she said, "Who knows whether yonder place be not the abode of my lord?" Thither, therefore, she turned her steps, hastening now the more because desire and hope pressed her on, weary as she was with the labours of the way, and so, painfully measuring out the highest ridges of the mountain, drew near to the sacred couches. She sees ears of wheat, in heaps or twisted into chaplets; ears of barley also, with sickles and all the instruments of harvest, lying there in disorder, thrown at random from the hands of the labourers in the great heat. These she curiously sets apart, one by one, duly ordering them; for she said within herself, "I may not neglect the shrines, nor the holy service, of any god there be, but must rather

win by supplication the kindly mercy of them all."

And Ceres found her bending sadly upon her task, and cried aloud, "Alas, Psyche! Venus, in the furiousness of her anger, tracks thy footsteps through the world, seeking for thee to pay her the utmost penalty; and thou, thinking of anything rather than thine own safety, hast taken on thee the care of what belongs to me!" Then Psyche fell down at her feet, and sweeping the floor with her hair, washing the footsteps of the goddess in her tears, besought her mercy, with many prayers:—"By the gladdening rites of harvest, by the lighted lamps and mystic marches of the Marriage and mysterious Invention of thy daughter Proserpine, and by all beside that the holy place of Attica veils in silence, minister, I pray thee, to the sorrowful heart of Psyche! Suffer me to hide myself but for a few days among the heaps of corn, till time have softened the anger of the goddess, and my strength, out-worn in my long travail, be recovered by a little rest."

But Ceres answered her, "Truly thy tears move me, and I would fain help thee; only I dare not incur the ill-will of my kinswoman. Depart hence as quickly as may be." And Psyche, repelled against hope, afflicted now with twofold sorrow, making her way back again, beheld among the half-lighted woods of the valley below a sanctuary builded with cunning

art. And that she might lose no way of hope, howsoever doubtful, she drew near to the sacred doors. She sees there gifts of price, and garments fixed upon the door-posts and to the branches of the trees, wrought with letters of gold which told the name of the goddess to whom they were dedicated, with thanksgiving for that she had done. So, with bent knee and hands laid about the glowing altar, she prayed saying, "Sister and spouse of Jupiter! be thou to these my desperate fortune's Juno the Auspicious! I know that thou dost willingly help those in travail with child; deliver me from the peril that is upon me." And as she prayed thus, Juno in the majesty of her godhead, was straightway present, and answered, "Would that I might incline favourably to thee; but against the will of Venus, whom I have ever loved as a daughter, I may not, for very shame, grant thy prayer."

And Psyche, dismayed by this new shipwreck of her hope, communed thus with herself, "Whither, from the midst of the snares that beset me, shall I take my way once more? In what dark solitude shall I hide me from the all-seeing eye of Venus? What if I put on at length a man's courage, and yielding myself unto her as my mistress, soften by a humility not yet too late the fierceness of her purpose? Who knows but that I may find him also whom my soul seeketh after, in the abode of his mother?"

And Venus, renouncing all earthly aid in her search, prepared to return to heaven. She ordered the chariot to be made ready, wrought for her by Vulcan as a marriage-gift, with a cunning of hand which had left his work so much the richer by the weight of gold it lost under his tool. From the multitude which housed about the bed-chamber of their mistress, white doves came forth, and with joyful motions bent their painted necks beneath the yoke. Behind it, with playful riot, the sparrows sped onward, and other birds sweet of song, making known by their soft notes the approach of the goddess. Eagle and cruel hawk alarmed not the quireful family of Venus. And the clouds broke away, as the uttermost ether opened to receive her, daughter and goddess, with great joy.

And Venus passed straightway to the house of Jupiter to beg from him the service of Mercury, the god of speech. And Jupiter refused not her prayer. And Venus and Mercury descended from heaven together; and as they went, the former said to the latter, "Thou knowest, my brother of Arcady, that never at any time have I done anything without thy help; for how long time, moreover, I have sought a certain maiden in vain. And now naught remains but that, by thy heraldry, I proclaim a reward for whomsoever shall find her. Do thou my bidding quickly." And therewith

she conveyed to him a little scrip, in the which was written the name of Psyche, with other things; and so returned home.

And Mercury failed not in his office; but departing into all lands, proclaimed that whosoever delivered up to Venus the fugitive girl, should receive from herself seven kisses—one thereof full of the inmost honey of her throat. With that the doubt of Psyche was ended. And now, as she came near to the doors of Venus, one of the household, whose name was Use-and-Wont, ran out to her, crying, "Hast thou learned, Wicked Maid! now at last! that thou hast a mistress?" And seizing her roughly by the hair, drew her into the presence of Venus. And when Venus saw her, she cried out, saying, "Thou hast deigned then to make thy salutations to thy mother-in-law. Now will I in turn treat thee as becometh a dutiful daughter-in-law!"

And she took barley and millet and poppy-seed, every kind of grain and seed, and mixed them together, and laughed, and said to her: "Methinks so plain a maiden can earn lovers only by industrious ministry: now will I also make trial of thy service. Sort me this heap of seed, the one kind from the others, grain by grain; and get thy task done before the evening." And Psyche, stunned by the cruelty of her bidding, was silent, and moved not her hand to the inextricable heap. And there came

forth a little ant, which had understanding of the difficulty of her task, and took pity upon the consort of the god of Love; and he ran deftly hither and thither, and called together the whole army of his fellows. "Have pity," he cried, "nimble scholars of the Earth, Mother of all things!—have pity upon the wife of Love, and hasten to help her in her perilous effort." Then, one upon the other, the hosts of the insect people hurried together; and they sorted asunder the whole heap of seed, separating every grain after its kind, and so departed quickly out of sight.

And at nightfall Venus returned, and seeing that task finished with so wonderful diligence, she cried, "The work is not thine, thou naughty maid, but his in whose eyes thou hast found favour." And calling her again in the morning, "See now the grove," she said, "beyond yonder torrent. Certain sheep feed there, whose fleeces shine with gold. Fetch me straightway a lock of that precious stuff, having gotten it as thou mayst."

And Psyche went forth willingly, not to obey the command of Venus, but even to seek a rest from her labour in the depths of the river. But from the river, the green reed, lowly mother of music, spake to her: "O Psyche! pollute not these waters by self-destruction, nor approach that terrible flock; for, as the heat groweth, they wax fierce. Lie down under yon plane-tree, till the

quiet of the river's breath have soothed them. Thereafter thou mayst shake down the fleecy gold from the trees of the grove, for it holdeth by the leaves."

And Psyche, instructed thus by the simple reed, in the humanity of its heart, filled her bosom with the soft golden stuff, and returned to Venus. But the goddess smiled bitterly, and said to her, "Well know I who was the author of this thing also. I will make further trial of thy discretion, and the boldness of thy heart. Seest thou the utmost peak of yonder steep mountain? The dark stream which flows down thence waters the Stygian fields, and swells the flood of Cocytus. Bring me now, in this little urn, a draught from its innermost source." And therewith she put into her hands a vessel of wrought crystal.

And Psyche set forth in haste on her way to the mountain, looking there at last to find the end of her hapless life. But when she came to the region which borders on the cliff that was showed to her, she understood the deadly nature of her task. From a great rock, steep and slippery, a horrible river of water poured forth, falling straightway by a channel exceeding narrow into the unseen gulf below. And lo! creeping from the rocks on either hand, angry serpents, with their long necks and sleepless eyes. The very waters found a voice and bade her depart, in smothered cries of, *Depart hence!* and

What doest thou here? Look around thee! and *Destruction is upon thee!* And then sense left her, in the immensity of her peril, as one changed to stone.

Yet not even then did the distress of this innocent soul escape the steady eye of a gentle providence. For the bird of Jupiter spread his wings and took flight to her, and asked her, "Didst thou think, simple one, even thou! that thou couldst steal one drop of that relentless stream, the holy river of Styx, terrible even to the gods? But give me thine urn." And the bird took the urn, and filled it at the source, and returned to her quickly from among the teeth of the serpents, bringing with him of the waters, all unwilling—nay! warning him to depart away and not molest them.

And she, receiving the urn with great joy, ran back quickly that she might deliver it to Venus, and yet again satisfied not the angry goddess. "My child!" she said, "in this one thing further must thou serve me. Take now this tiny casket, and get thee down even unto hell, and deliver it to Proserpine. Tell her that Venus would have of her beauty so much at least as may suffice for but one day's use, that beauty she possessed erewhile being foreworn and spoiled, through her tendance upon the sick-bed of her son; and be not slow in returning."

And Psyche perceived there the last ebbing of her fortune—that she was now thrust openly

upon death, who must go down, of her own motion, to Hades and the Shades. And straightway she climbed to the top of an exceeding high tower, thinking within herself, "I will cast myself down thence: so shall I descend most quickly into the kingdom of the dead." And the tower again, broke forth into speech: "Wretched Maid! Wretched Maid! Wilt thou destroy thyself? If the breath quit thy body, then wilt thou indeed go down into Hades, but by no means return hither. Listen to me. Among the pathless wilds not far from this place lies a certain mountain, and therein one of hell's vent-holes. Through the breach a rough way lies open, following which thou wilt come, by straight course, to the castle of Orcus. And thou must not go empty-handed. Take in each hand a morsel of barley-bread, soaked in hydromel; and in thy mouth two pieces of money. And when thou shalt be now well onward in the way of death, then wilt thou overtake a lame ass laden with wood, and a lame driver, who will pray thee reach him certain cords to fasten the burden which is falling from the ass: but be thou cautious to pass on in silence. And soon as thou comest to the river of the dead, Charon, in that crazy bark he hath, will put thee over upon the further side. There is greed even among the dead. and thou shalt deliver to him, for the ferrying, one of those two pieces of money, in such wise that he take

it with his hand from between thy lips. And as thou passest over the stream, a dead old man, rising on the water, will put up to thee his mouldering hands, and pray thee draw him into the ferry-boat. But beware thou yield not to unlawful pity.

"When thou shalt be come over, and art upon the causeway, certain aged women, spinning, will cry to thee to lend thy hand to their work; and beware again that thou take no part therein; for this also is the snare of Venus, whereby she would cause thee to cast away one at least of those cakes thou bearest in thy hands. And think not that a slight matter; for the loss of either one of them will be to thee the losing of the light of day. For a watch-dog exceeding fierce lies ever before the threshold of that lonely house of Proserpine. Close his mouth with one of thy cakes; so shalt thou pass by him, and enter straightway into the presence of Proserpine herself. Then do thou deliver thy message, and taking what she shall give thee, return back again; offering to the watch-dog the other cake, and to the ferryman that other piece of money thou hast in thy mouth. After this manner mayst thou return again beneath the stars. But withal, I charge thee, think not to look into, nor open, the casket thou bearest, with that treasure of the beauty of the divine countenance hidden therein."

So spake the stones of the tower; and Psyche

delayed not, but proceeding diligently after the manner enjoined, entered into the house of Proserpine, at whose feet she sat down humbly, and would neither the delicate couch nor that divine food the goddess offered her, but did straightway the business of Venus. And Proserpine filled the casket secretly and shut the lid, and delivered it to Psyche, who fled therewith from Hades with new strength. But coming back into the light of day, even as she hasted now to the ending of her service, she was seized by a rash curiosity. "Lo! now," she said within herself, "my simpleness! who bearing in my hands the divine loveliness, heed not to touch myself with a particle at least therefrom, that I may please the more, by the favour of it, my fair one, my beloved." Even as she spoke, she lifted the lid; and behold! within, neither beauty, nor anything beside, save sleep only, the sleep of the dead, which took hold upon her, filling all her members with its drowsy vapour, so that she lay down in the way and moved not, as in the slumber of death.

And Cupid being healed of his wound, because he would endure no longer the absence of her he loved, gliding through the narrow window of the chamber wherein he was holden, his pinions being now repaired by a little rest, fled forth swiftly upon them, and coming to the place where Psyche was, shook that sleep away from her, and set him in his prison again, awaking her with the

innocent point of his arrow. "Lo! thine old error again," he said, "which had like once more to have destroyed thee! But do thou now what is lacking of the command of my mother: the rest shall be my care." With these words, the lover rose upon the air; and being consumed inwardly with the greatness of his love, penetrated with vehement wing into the highest place of heaven, to lay his cause before the father of the gods. And the father of gods took his hand in his, and kissed his face and said to him, "At no time, my son, hast thou regarded me with due honour. Often hast thou vexed my bosom, wherein lies the disposition of the stars, with those busy darts of thine. Nevertheless, because thou hast grown up between these mine hands, I will accomplish thy desire." And straightway he bade Mercury call the gods together; and, the council-chamber being filled, sitting upon a high throne, "Ye gods," he said, "all ye whose names are in the white book of the Muses, ye know yonder lad. It seems good to me that his youthful heats should by some means be restrained. And that all occasion may be taken from him, I would even confine him in the bonds of marriage. He has chosen and embraced a mortal maiden. Let him have fruit of his love, and possess her for ever."

Thereupon he bade Mercury produce Psyche in heaven; and holding out to her his ambrosial cup, "Take it," he said, "and live for ever;

nor shall Cupid ever depart from thee." And the gods sat down together to the marriage-feast. On the first couch lay the bridegroom, and Psyche in his bosom. His rustic serving-boy bare the wine to Jupiter; and Bacchus to the rest. The Seasons crimsoned all things with their roses. Apollo sang to the lyre, while a little Pan prattled on his reeds, and Venus danced very sweetly to the soft music. Thus, with due rites, did Psyche pass into the power of Cupid; and from them was born the daughter whom men call Voluptas.

CHAPTER VI

EUPHUISM

So the famous story composed itself in the memory of Marius, with an expression changed in some ways from the original and on the whole graver. The petulant, boyish Cupid of Apuleius was become more like that "Lord, of terrible aspect," who stood at Dante's bedside and wept, or had at least grown to the manly earnestness of the *Erôs* of Praxiteles. Set in relief amid the coarser matter of the book, this episode of Cupid and Psyche served to combine many lines of meditation, already familiar to Marius, into the ideal of a perfect imaginative love, centered upon a type of beauty entirely flawless and clean —an ideal which never wholly faded from his thoughts, though he valued it at various times in different degrees. The human body in its beauty, as the highest potency of all the beauty of material objects, seemed to him just then to be matter no longer, but, having taken celestial fire, to assert itself as indeed the true, though visible,

soul or spirit in things. In contrast with that ideal, in all the pure brilliancy, and as it were in the happy light, of youth and morning and the springtide, men's actual loves, with which at many points the book brings one into close contact, might appear to him, like the general tenor of their lives, to be somewhat mean and sordid. The *hiddenness* of perfect things: a shrinking mysticism, a sentiment of diffidence like that expressed in Psyche's so tremulous hope concerning the child to be born of the husband she had never yet seen—" in the face of this little child, at the least, shall I apprehend thine"—*in hoc saltem parvulo cognoscam faciem tuam*: the fatality which seems to haunt any signal beauty, whether moral or physical, as if it were in itself something illicit and isolating: the suspicion and hatred it so often excites in the vulgar:—these were some of the impressions, forming, as they do, a constant tradition of somewhat cynical pagan experience, from Medusa and Helen downwards, which the old story enforced on him. A book, like a person, has its fortunes with one; is lucky or unlucky in the precise moment of its falling in our way, and often by some happy accident counts with us for something more than its independent value. The *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius, coming to Marius just then, figured for him as indeed *The Golden Book:* he felt a sort of personal gratitude to its writer, and saw in it doubtless

far more than was really there for any other reader. It occupied always a peculiar place in his remembrance, never quite losing its power in frequent return to it for the revival of that first glowing impression.

Its effect upon the elder youth was a more practical one : it stimulated the literary ambition, already so strong a motive with him, by a signal example of success, and made him more than ever an ardent, indefatigable student of words, of the means or instrument of the literary art. The secrets of utterance, of expression itself, of that through which alone any intellectual or spiritual power within one can actually take effect upon others, to over-awe or charm them to one's side, presented themselves to this ambitious lad in immediate connexion with that desire for predominance, for the satisfaction of which another might have relied on the acquisition and display of brilliant military qualities. In him, a fine instinctive sentiment of the exact value and power of words was connate with the eager longing for sway over his fellows. He saw himself already a gallant and effective leader, innovating or conservative as occasion might require, in the rehabilitation of the mother-tongue, then fallen so tarnished and languid ; yet the sole object, as he mused within himself, of the only sort of patriotic feeling proper, or possible, for one born of slaves. The popular speech was gradually departing from the form

and rule of literary language, a language always and increasingly artificial. While the learned dialect was yearly becoming more and more barbarously pedantic, the colloquial idiom, on the other hand, offered a thousand chance-tost gems of racy or picturesque expression, rejected or at least ungathered by what claimed to be classical Latin. The time was coming when neither the pedants nor the people would really understand Cicero; though there were some indeed, like this new writer, Apuleius, who, departing from the custom of writing in Greek, which had been a fashionable affectation among the sprightlier wits since the days of Hadrian, had written in the vernacular.

The literary programme which Flavian had already designed for himself would be a work, then, partly conservative or reactionary, in its dealing with the instrument of the literary art; partly popular and revolutionary, asserting, so to term them, the rights of the *prolétariate* of speech. More than fifty years before, the younger Pliny, himself an effective witness for the delicate power of the Latin tongue, had said, "I am one of those who admire the ancients, yet I do not, like some others, underrate certain instances of genius which our own times afford. For it is not true that nature, as if weary and effete, no longer produces what is admirable." And he, Flavian, would prove himself the true master of the opportunity thus indicated. In

his eagerness for a not too distant fame, he dreamed over all that, as the young Cæsar may have dreamed of campaigns. Others might brutalise or neglect the native speech, that true "open field" for charm and sway over men. He would make of it a serious study, weighing the precise power of every phrase and word, as though it were precious metal, disentangling the later associations and going back to the original and native sense of each,—restoring to full significance all its wealth of latent figurative expression, reviving or replacing its outworn or tarnished images. Latin literature and the Latin tongue were dying of routine and languor; and what was necessary, first of all, was to re-establish the natural and direct relationship between thought and expression, between the sensation and the term, and restore to words their primitive power.

For words, after all, words manipulated with all his delicate force, were to be the apparatus of a war for himself. To be forcibly impressed, in the first place; and in the next, to find the means of making visible to others that which was vividly apparent, delightful, of lively interest to himself, to the exclusion of all that was but middling, tame, or only half-true even to him—this scrupulousness of literary art actually awoke in Flavian, for the first time, a sort of chivalrous conscience. What care for style! what patience of execution! what research for the significant

tones of ancient idiom—*sonantia verba et antiqua !* What stately and regular word-building—*gravis et decora constructio !* He felt the whole meaning of the sceptical Pliny's somewhat melancholy advice to one of his friends, that he should seek in literature deliverance from mortality—*ut studiis se literarum a mortalitate vindicet.* And there was everything in the nature and the training of Marius to make him a full participator in the hopes of such a new literary school, with Flavian for its leader. In the refinements of that curious spirit, in its horror of profanities, its fastidious sense of a correctness in external form, there was something which ministered to the old ritual interest, still surviving in him ; as if here indeed were involved a kind of sacred service to the mother-tongue.

Here, then, was the theory of Euphuism, as manifested in every age in which the literary conscience has been awakened to forgotten duties towards language, towards the instrument of expression : in fact it does but modify a little the principles of all effective expression at all times. 'Tis art's function to conceal itself : *ars est celare artem :*—is a saying, which, exaggerated by inexact quotation, has perhaps been oftenest and most confidently quoted by those who have had little literary or other art to conceal ; and from the very beginning of professional literature, the "labour of the file"—a labour in the case of Plato, for instance, or Virgil, like

that of the oldest of goldsmiths as described by Apuleius, enriching the work by far more than the weight of precious metal it removed—has always had its function. Sometimes, doubtless, as in later examples of it, this Roman Euphuism, determined at any cost to attain beauty in writing—ἐς κάλλος γράφειν—might lapse into its characteristic fopperies or mannerisms, into the "defects of its qualities," in truth, not wholly unpleasing perhaps, or at least excusable, when looked at as but the toys (so Cicero calls them), the strictly congenial and appropriate toys, of an assiduously cultivated age, which could not help being polite, critical, self-conscious. The mere love of novelty also had, of course, its part there: as with the Euphuism of the Elizabethan age, and of the modern French romanticists, its *neologies* were the ground of one of the favourite charges against it; though indeed, as regards these tricks of taste also, there is nothing new, but a quaint family likeness rather, between the Euphuists of successive ages. Here, as elsewhere, the power of "fashion," as it is called, is but one minor form, slight enough, it may be, yet distinctly symptomatic, of that deeper yearning of human nature towards ideal perfection, which is a continuous force in it; and since in this direction too human nature is limited, such fashions must necessarily reproduce themselves. Among other resemblances to later growths of Euphuism, its archaisms on the one hand, and

its neologies on the other, the Euphuism of the days of Marcus Aurelius had, in the composition of verse, its fancy for the *refrain*. It was a snatch from a popular chorus, something he had heard sounding all over the town of Pisa one April night, one of the first bland and summer-like nights of the year, that Flavian had chosen for the refrain of a poem he was then pondering—the *Pervigilium Veneris*—the vigil, or "nocturn," of Venus.

Certain elderly counsellors, filling what may be thought a constant part in the little tragi-comedy which literature and its votaries are playing in all ages, would ask, suspecting some affectation or unreality in that minute culture of *form*:—Cannot those who have a thing to say, say it directly? Why not be simple and broad, like the old writers of Greece? And this challenge had at least the effect of setting his thoughts at work on the intellectual situation as it lay between the children of the present and those earliest masters. Certainly, the most wonderful, the unique, point, about the Greek genius, in literature as in everything else, was the entire absence of imitation in its productions. How had the burden of precedent, laid upon every artist, increased since then! It was all around one:—that smoothly built world of old classical taste, an accomplished fact, with overwhelming authority on every detail of the conduct of one's

work. With no fardel on its own back, yet so imperious towards those who came labouring after it, *Hellas*, in its early freshness, looked as distant from him even then as it does from ourselves. There might seem to be no place left for novelty or originality,—place only for a patient, an infinite, faultlessness. On this question too Flavian passed through a world of curious art-casuistries, of self-tormenting, at the threshold of his work. Was poetic beauty a thing ever one and the same, a type absolute; or, changing always with the soul of time itself, did it depend upon the taste, the peculiar trick of apprehension, the fashion, as we say, of each successive age? Might one recover that old, earlier sense of it, that earlier manner, in a masterly effort to recall all the complexities of the life, moral and intellectual, of the earlier age to which it had belonged? Had there been really bad ages in art or literature? Were all ages, even those earliest, adventurous, matutinal days, in themselves equally poetical or unpoetical; and poetry, the literary beauty, the poetic ideal, always but a borrowed light upon men's actual life?

Homer had said—

> Οἱ δ' ὅτε δὴ λιμένος πολυβενθέος ἐντὸς ἵκοντο,
> Ἱστία μὲν στείλαντο, θέσαν δ' ἐν νηῒ μελαίνῃ . . .
> Ἐκ δὲ καὶ αὐτοὶ βαῖνον ἐπὶ ῥηγμῖνι θαλάσσης.

And how poetic the simple incident seemed, told just thus! Homer was always telling

things after this manner. And one might think there had been no effort in it: that here was but the almost mechanical transcript of a time, naturally, intrinsically, poetic, a time in which one could hardly have spoken at all without ideal effect, or, the sailors pulled down their boat without making a picture in "the great style," against a sky charged with marvels. Must not the mere prose of an age, itself thus ideal, have counted for more than half of Homer's poetry? Or might the closer student discover even here, even in Homer, the really mediatorial function of the poet, as between the reader and the actual matter of his experience; the poet waiting, so to speak, in an age which had felt itself trite and commonplace enough, on his opportunity for the touch of "golden alchemy," or at least for the pleasantly lighted side of things themselves? Might not another, in one's own prosaic and used-up time, so uneventful as it had been through the long reign of these quiet Antonines, in like manner, discover his ideal, by a due waiting upon it? Would not a future generation, looking back upon this, under the power of the enchanted-distance fallacy, find it ideal to view, in contrast with its own languor —the languor that for some reason (concerning which Augustine will one day have his view) seemed to haunt men always? Had Homer, even, appeared unreal and affected in his poetic flight, to some of the people of his own age,

as seemed to happen with every new literature in turn? In any case, the intellectual conditions of early Greece had been—how different from these! And a true literary tact would accept that difference in forming the primary conception of the literary function at a later time. Perhaps the utmost one could get by conscious effort, in the way of a reaction or return to the conditions of an earlier and fresher age, would be but *novitas*, artificial artlessness, *naïveté;* and this quality too might have its measure of euphuistic charm, direct and sensible enough, though it must count, in comparison with that genuine early Greek newness at the beginning, not as the freshness of the open fields, but only of a bunch of field-flowers in a heated room.

There was, meantime, all this:—on one side, the old pagan culture, for us but a fragment, for him an accomplished yet present fact, still a living, united, organic whole, in the entirety of its art, its thought, its religions, its sagacious forms of polity, that so weighty authority it exercised on every point, being in reality only the measure of its charm for every one: on the other side, the actual world in all its eager self-assertion, with Flavian himself, in his boundless animation, there, at the centre of the situation. From the natural defects, from the pettiness, of his euphuism, his assiduous cultivation of manner, he was saved by the consciousness that he had a matter to present, very real,

at least to him. That preoccupation of the *dilettante* with what might seem mere details of form, after all, did but serve the purpose of bringing to the surface, sincerely and in their integrity, certain strong personal intuitions, a certain vision or apprehension of things as really being, with important results, thus, rather than thus,—intuitions which the artistic or literary faculty was called upon to follow, with the exactness of wax or clay, clothing the model within. Flavian too, with his fine clear mastery of the practically effective, had early laid hold of the principle, as axiomatic in literature: that to know when one's self is interested, is the first condition of interesting other people. It was a principle, the forcible apprehension of which made him jealous and fastidious in the selection of his intellectual food; often listless while others read or gazed diligently; never pretending to be moved out of mere complaisance to other people's emotions: it served to foster in him a very scrupulous literary sincerity with himself. And it was this uncompromising demand for a matter, in all art, derived immediately from lively personal intuition, this constant appeal to individual judgment, which saved his euphuism, even at its weakest, from lapsing into mere artifice.

Was the magnificent *exordium* of Lucretius, addressed to the goddess Venus, the work of

his earlier manhood, and designed originally to open an argument less persistently sombre than that protest against the whole pagan heaven which actually follows it? It is certainly the most typical expression of a mood, still incident to the young poet, as a thing peculiar to his youth, when he feels the sentimental current setting forcibly along his veins, and so much as a matter of purely physical excitement, that he can hardly distinguish it from the animation of external nature, the upswelling of the seed in the earth, and of the sap through the trees. Flavian, to whom, again, as to his later euphuistic kinsmen, old mythology seemed as full of untried, unexpressed motives and interest as human life itself, had long been occupied with a kind of mystic hymn to the vernal principle of life in things; a composition shaping itself, little by little, out of a thousand dim perceptions, into singularly definite form (definite and firm as fine-art in metal, thought Marius) for which, as I said, he had caught his "refrain," from the lips of the young men, singing because they could not help it, in the streets of Pisa. And as oftenest happens also, with natures of genuinely poetic quality, those piecemeal beginnings came suddenly to harmonious completeness among the fortunate incidents, the physical heat and light, of one singularly happy day.

It was one of the first hot days of March—"the sacred day"—on which, from Pisa, as from

many another harbour on the Mediterranean, the *Ship of Isis* went to sea, and every one walked down to the shore-side to witness the freighting of the vessel, its launching and final abandonment among the waves, as an object really devoted to the Great Goddess, that new rival, or "double," of ancient Venus, and like her a favourite patroness of sailors. On the evening next before, all the world had been abroad to view the illumination of the river; the stately lines of building being wreathed with hundreds of many-coloured lamps. The young men had poured forth their chorus—

Cras amet qui nunquam amavit,
Quique amavit cras amet—

as they bore their torches through the yielding crowd, or rowed their lanterned boats up and down the stream, till far into the night, when heavy rain-drops had driven the last lingerers home. Morning broke, however, smiling and serene; and the long procession started betimes. The river, curving slightly, with the smoothly paved streets on either side, between its low marble parapet and the fair dwelling-houses, formed the main highway of the city; and the pageant, accompanied throughout by innumerable lanterns and wax tapers, took its course up one of these streets, crossing the water by a bridge up-stream, and down the other, to the haven, every possible standing-place, out of doors

and within, being crowded with sight-seers, of whom Marius was one of the most eager, deeply interested in finding the spectacle much as Apuleius had described it in his famous book.

At the head of the procession, the master of ceremonies, quietly waving back the assistants, made way for a number of women, scattering perfumes. They were succeeded by a company of musicians, piping and twanging, on instruments the strangest Marius had ever beheld, the notes of a hymn, narrating the first origin of this votive rite to a choir of youths, who marched behind them singing it. The tire-women and other personal attendants of the great goddess came next, bearing the instruments of their ministry, and various articles from the sacred wardrobe, wrought of the most precious material; some of them with long ivory combs, plying their hands in wild yet graceful concert of movement as they went, in devout mimicry of the toilet. Placed in their rear were the mirror-bearers of the goddess, carrying large mirrors of beaten brass or silver, turned in such a way as to reflect to the great body of worshippers who followed, the face of the mysterious image, as it moved on its way, and their faces to it, as though they were in fact advancing to meet the heavenly visitor. They comprehended a multitude of both sexes and of all ages, already initiated into the divine secret, clad in fair linen, the females veiled, the males with shining

tonsures, and every one carrying a *sistrum*—the richer sort of silver, a few very dainty persons of fine gold—rattling the reeds, with a noise like the jargon of innumerable birds and insects awakened from torpor and abroad in the spring sun. Then, borne upon a kind of platform, came the goddess herself, undulating above the heads of the multitude as the bearers walked, in mystic robe embroidered with the moon and stars, bordered gracefully with a fringe of real fruit and flowers, and with a glittering crown upon the head. The train of the procession consisted of the priests in long white vestments, close from head to foot, distributed into various groups, each bearing, exposed aloft, one of the sacred symbols of Isis—the corn-fan, the golden asp, the ivory hand of equity, and among them the votive ship itself, carved and gilt, and adorned bravely with flags flying. Last of all walked the high priest; the people kneeling as he passed to kiss his hand, in which were those well-remembered roses.

Marius followed with the rest to the harbour, where the mystic ship, lowered from the shoulders of the priests, was loaded with as much as it could carry of the rich spices and other costly gifts, offered in great profusion by the worshippers, and thus, launched at last upon the water, left the shore, crossing the harbour-bar in the wake of a much stouter vessel than itself with a crew of white-robed mariners, whose

function it was, at the appointed moment, finally to desert it on the open sea.

The remainder of the day was spent by most in parties on the water. Flavian and Marius sailed further than they had ever done before to a wild spot on the bay, the traditional site of a little Greek colony, which, having had its eager, stirring life at the time when Etruria was still a power in Italy, had perished in the age of the civil wars. In the absolute transparency of the air on this gracious day, an infinitude of detail from sea and shore reached the eye with sparkling clearness, as the two lads sped rapidly over the waves—Flavian at work suddenly, from time to time, with his tablets. They reached land at last. The coral fishers had spread their nets on the sands, with a tumble-down of quaint, many-hued treasures, below a little shrine of Venus, fluttering and gay with the scarves and napkins and gilded shells which these people had offered to the image. Flavian and Marius sat down under the shadow of a mass of gray rock or ruin, where the sea-gate of the Greek town had been, and talked of life in those old Greek colonies. Of this place, all that remained, besides those rude stones, was—a handful of silver coins, each with a head of pure and archaic beauty, though a little cruel perhaps, supposed to represent the Siren Ligeia, whose tomb was formerly shown here—only these, and an ancient song, the very strain which Flavian

had recovered in those last months. They were records which spoke, certainly, of the charm of life within those walls. How strong must have been the tide of men's existence in that little republican town, so small that this circle of gray stones, of service now only by the moisture they gathered for the blue-flowering gentians among them, had been the line of its rampart! An epitome of all that was liveliest, most animated and adventurous, in the old Greek people of which it was an offshoot, it had enhanced the effect of these gifts by concentration within narrow limits. The band of "devoted youth," ἱερὰ νεότης—of the younger brothers, devoted to the gods and whatever luck the gods might afford, because there was no room for them at home—went forth, bearing the sacred flame from the mother hearth; itself a flame, of power to consume the whole material of existence in clear light and heat, with no smouldering residue. The life of those vanished townsmen, so brilliant and revolutionary, applying so abundantly the personal qualities which alone just then Marius seemed to value, associated itself with the actual figure of his companion, standing there before him, his face enthusiastic with the sudden thought of all that; and struck him vividly as precisely the fitting opportunity for a nature like his, so hungry for control, for ascendency over men.

Marius noticed also, however, as high spirits

flagged at last, on the way home through the heavy dew of the evening, more than physical fatigue in Flavian, who seemed to find no refreshment in the coolness. There had been something feverish, perhaps, and like the beginning of sickness, about his almost forced gaiety, in this sudden spasm of spring; and by the evening of the next day he was lying with a burning spot on his forehead, stricken, as was thought from the first, by the terrible new disease.

CHAPTER VII

A PAGAN END

For the fantastical colleague of the philosophic emperor Marcus Aurelius, returning in triumph from the East, had brought in his train, among the enemies of Rome, one by no means a captive. People actually sickened at a sudden touch of the unsuspected foe, as they watched in dense crowds the pathetic or grotesque imagery of failure or success in the triumphal procession. And, as usual, the plague brought with it a power to develop all pre-existent germs of superstition. It was by dishonour done to Apollo himself, said popular rumour—to Apollo, the old titular divinity of pestilence, that the poisonous thing had come abroad. Pent up in a golden coffer consecrated to the god, it had escaped in the sacrilegious plundering of his temple at Seleucia by the soldiers of Lucius Verus, after a traitorous surprise of that town and a cruel massacre. Certainly there was something which baffled all imaginable precautions and all medical science, in the suddenness

with which the disease broke out simultaneously, here and there, among both soldiers and citizens, even in places far remote from the main line of its march in the rear of the victorious army. It seemed to have invaded the whole empire, and some have even thought that, in a mitigated form, it permanently remained there. In Rome itself many thousands perished ; and old authorities tell of farmsteads, whole towns, and even entire neighbourhoods, which from that time continued without inhabitants and lapsed into wildness or ruin.

Flavian lay at the open window of his lodging, with a fiery pang in the brain, fancying no covering thin or light enough to be applied to his body. His head being relieved after a while, there was distress at the chest. It was but the fatal course of the strange new sickness, under many disguises ; travelling from the brain to the feet, like a material resident, weakening one after another of the organic centres ; often, when it did not kill, depositing various degrees of lifelong infirmity in this member or that ; and after such descent, returning upwards again, now as a mortal coldness, leaving the entrenchments of the fortress of life overturned, one by one, behind it.

Flavian lay there, with the enemy at his breast now in a painful cough, but relieved from that burning fever in the head, amid the rich-scented flowers—rare Pæstum roses, and the like

—procured by Marius for his solace, in a fancied convalescence ; and would, at intervals, return to labour at his verses, with a great eagerness to complete and transcribe the work, while Marius sat and wrote at his dictation, one of the latest but not the poorest specimens of genuine Latin poetry.

It was in fact a kind of nuptial hymn, which, taking its start from the thought of nature as the universal mother, celebrated the preliminary pairing and mating together of all fresh things, in the hot and genial spring-time—the immemorial nuptials of the soul of spring itself and the brown earth ; and was full of a delighted, mystic sense of what passed between them in that fantastic marriage. That mystic burden was relieved, at intervals, by the familiar playfulness of the Latin verse-writer in dealing with mythology, which, though coming at so late a day, had still a wonderful freshness in its old age. —"*Amor* has put his weapons by and will keep holiday. He was bidden go without apparel, that none might be wounded by his bow and arrows. But take care ! In truth he is none the less armed than usual, though he be all unclad."

In the expression of all this Flavian seemed, while making it his chief aim to retain the opulent, many-syllabled vocabulary of the Latin genius, at some points even to have advanced beyond it, in anticipation of wholly new laws of

taste as regards sound, a new range of sound itself. The peculiar resultant note, associating itself with certain other experiences of his, was to Marius like the foretaste of an entirely novel world of poetic beauty to come. Flavian had caught, indeed, something of the rhyming cadence, the sonorous organ-music of the medieval Latin, and therewithal something of its unction and mysticity of spirit. There was in his work, along with the last splendour of the classical language, a touch, almost prophetic, of that transformed life it was to have in the rhyming middle age, just about to dawn. The impression thus forced upon Marius connected itself with a feeling, the exact inverse of that, known to every one, which seems to say, *You have been just here, just thus, before !*—a feeling, in his case, not reminiscent but prescient of the future, which passed over him afterwards many times, as he came across certain places and people. It was as if he detected there the process of actual change to a wholly undreamed-of and renewed condition of human body and soul : as if he saw the heavy yet decrepit old Roman architecture about him, rebuilding on an intrinsically better pattern.—Could it have been actually on a new musical instrument that Flavian had first heard the novel accents of his verse ? And still Marius noticed there, amid all its richness of expression and imagery, that firmness of outline he had always relished so much in the composition of

Flavian. Yes! a firmness like that of some master of noble metal-work, manipulating tenacious bronze or gold. Even now that haunting refrain, with its *impromptu* variations, from the throats of those strong young men, came floating through the window.

Cras amet qui nunquam amavit,
Quique amavit cras amet!

—repeated Flavian, tremulously, dictating yet one stanza more.

What he was losing, his freehold of a soul and body so fortunately endowed, the mere liberty of life above-ground, "those sunny mornings in the cornfields by the sea," as he recollected them one day, when the window was thrown open upon the early freshness—his sense of all this, was from the first singularly near and distinct, yet rather as of something he was but debarred the use of for a time than finally bidding farewell to. That was while he was still with no very grave misgivings as to the issue of his sickness, and felt the sources of life still springing essentially unadulterate within him. From time to time, indeed, Marius, labouring eagerly at the poem from his dictation, was haunted by a feeling of the triviality of such work just then. The recurrent sense of some obscure danger beyond the mere danger of death, vaguer than that and by so much the more terrible, like the menace of some shadowy

adversary in the dark with whose mode of attack they had no acquaintance, disturbed him now and again through those hours of excited attention to his manuscript, and to the purely physical wants of Flavian. Still, during these three days there was much hope and cheerfulness, and even jesting. Half-consciously Marius tried to prolong one or another relieving circumstance of the day, the preparations for rest and morning refreshment, for instance; sadly making the most of the little luxury of this or that, with something of the feigned cheer of the mother who sets her last morsels before her famished child as for a feast, but really that he "may eat it and die."

On the afternoon of the seventh day he allowed Marius finally to put aside the unfinished manuscript. For the enemy, leaving the chest quiet at length though much exhausted, had made itself felt with full power again in a painful vomiting, which seemed to shake his body asunder, with great consequent prostration. From that time the distress increased rapidly downwards. *Omnia tum vero vitai claustra lababant;* and soon the cold was mounting with sure pace from the dead feet to the head.

And now Marius began more than to suspect what the issue must be, and henceforward could but watch with a sort of agonised fascination the rapid but systematic work of the destroyer,

faintly relieving a little the mere accidents of the sharper forms of suffering. Flavian himself appeared, in full consciousness at last—in clear-sighted, deliberate estimate of the actual crisis —to be doing battle with his adversary. His mind surveyed, with great distinctness, the various suggested modes of relief. He must without fail get better, he would fancy, might he be removed to a certain place on the hills where as a child he had once recovered from sickness, but found that he could scarcely raise his head from the pillow without giddiness. As if now surely foreseeing the end, he would set himself, with an eager effort, and with that eager and angry look, which is noted as one of the premonitions of death in this disease, to fashion out, without formal dictation, still a few more broken verses of his unfinished work, in hard-set determination, defiant of pain, to arrest this or that little drop at least from the river of sensuous imagery rushing so quickly past him.

But at length *delirium*—symptom that the work of the plague was done, and the last resort of life yielding to the enemy—broke the coherent order of words and thoughts; and Marius, intent on the coming agony, found his best hope in the increasing dimness of the patient's mind. In intervals of clearer consciousness the visible signs of cold, of sorrow and desolation, were very painful. No longer battling with the disease, he seemed as it were to place himself

at the disposal of the victorious foe, dying passively, like some dumb creature, in hopeless acquiescence at last. That old, half-pleading petulance, unamiable, yet, as it might seem, only needing conditions of life a little happier than they had actually been, to become refinement of affection, a delicate grace in its demand on the sympathy of others, had changed in those moments of full intelligence to a clinging and tremulous gentleness, as he lay—"on the very threshold of death"—with a sharply contracted hand in the hand of Marius, to his almost surprised joy, winning him now to an absolutely self-forgetful devotion. There was a new sort of pleading in the misty eyes, just because they took such unsteady note of him, which made Marius feel as if *guilty*; anticipating thus a form of self-reproach with which even the tenderest ministrant may be sometimes surprised, when, at death, affectionate labour suddenly ceasing leaves room for the suspicion of some failure of love perhaps, at one or another minute point in it. Marius almost longed to take his share in the suffering, that he might understand so the better how to relieve it.

It seemed that the light of the lamp distressed the patient, and Marius extinguished it. The thunder which had sounded all day among the hills, with a heat not unwelcome to Flavian, had given way at nightfall to steady rain; and

in the darkness Marius lay down beside him, faintly shivering now in the sudden cold, to lend him his own warmth, undeterred by the fear of contagion which had kept other people from passing near the house. At length about day-break he perceived that the last effort had come with a revival of mental clearness, as Marius understood by the contact, light as it was, in recognition of him there. "Is it a comfort," he whispered then, "that I shall often come and weep over you?"—"Not unless I be aware, and hear you weeping!"

The sun shone out on the people going to work for a long hot day, and Marius was standing by the dead, watching, with deliberate purpose to fix in his memory every detail, that he might have this picture in reserve, should any hour of forgetfulness hereafter come to him with the temptation to feel completely happy again. A feeling of outrage, of resentment against nature itself, mingled with an agony of pity, as he noted on the now placid features a certain look of humility, almost abject, like the expression of a smitten child or animal, as of one, fallen at last, after bewildering struggle, wholly under the power of a merciless adversary. From mere tenderness of soul he would not forget one circumstance in all that; as a man might piously stamp on his memory the death-scene of a brother wrongfully condemned to die, against a time that may come.

The fear of the corpse, which surprised him in his effort to watch by it through the darkness, was a hint of his own failing strength, just in time. The first night after the washing of the body, he bore stoutly enough the tax which affection seemed to demand, throwing the incense from time to time on the little altar placed beside the bier. It was the recurrence of the thing—that unchanged outline below the coverlet, amid a silence in which the faintest rustle seemed to speak—that finally overcame his determination. Surely, here, in this alienation, this sense of distance between them, which had come over him before though in minor degree when the mind of Flavian had wandered in his sickness, was another of the pains of death. Yet he was able to make all due preparations, and go through the ceremonies, shortened a little because of the infection, when, on a cloudless evening, the funeral procession went forth; himself, the flames of the pyre having done their work, carrying away the urn of the deceased, in the folds of his toga, to its last resting-place in the cemetery beside the highway, and so turning home to sleep in his own desolate lodging.

Quis desiderio sit pudor aut modus
Tam cari capitis?—

What thought of others' thoughts about one could there be with the regret for "so dear a head" fresh at one's heart?

PART THE SECOND

CHAPTER VIII

ANIMULA VAGULA

Animula, vagula, blandula
Hospes comesque corporis,
Quae nunc abibis in loca ?
Pallidula, rigida, nudula.

The Emperor Hadrian to his Soul.

FLAVIAN was no more. The little marble chest with its dust and tears lay cold among the faded flowers. For most people the actual spectacle of death brings out into greater reality, at least for the imagination, whatever confidence they may entertain of the soul's survival in another life. To Marius, greatly agitated by that event, the earthly end of Flavian came like a final revelation of nothing less than the soul's extinction. Flavian had gone out as utterly as the fire among those still beloved ashes. Even that wistful suspense of judgment expressed by the dying Hadrian, regarding further stages of being still possible for the soul in some dim journey hence, seemed wholly untenable, and, with it, almost all that remained of the religion of his childhood. Future extinction seemed just then

to be what the unforced witness of his own nature pointed to. On the other hand, there came a novel curiosity as to what the various schools of ancient philosophy had had to say concerning that strange, fluttering creature; and that curiosity impelled him to certain severe studies, in which his earlier religious conscience seemed still to survive, as a principle of hieratic scrupulousness or integrity of thought, regarding this new service to intellectual light.

At this time, by his poetic and inward temper, he might have fallen a prey to the enervating mysticism, then in wait for ardent souls in many a melodramatic revival of old religion or theosophy. From all this, fascinating as it might actually be to one side of his character, he was kept by a genuine virility there, effective in him, among other results, as a hatred of what was theatrical, and the instinctive recognition that in vigorous intelligence, after all, divinity was most likely to be found a resident. With this was connected the feeling, increasing with his advance to manhood, of a poetic beauty in mere clearness of thought, the actually æsthetic charm of a cold austerity of mind; as if the kinship of that to the clearness of physical light were something more than a figure of speech. Of all those various religious fantasies, as so many forms of enthusiasm, he could well appreciate the picturesque; that was made easy by his natural Epicureanism, already prompting

him to conceive of himself as but the passive spectator of the world around him. But it was to the severer reasoning, of which such matters as Epicurean theory are born, that, in effect, he now betook himself. Instinctively suspicious of those mechanical *arcana*, those pretended "secrets unveiled" of the professional mystic, which really bring great and little souls to one level, for Marius the only possible dilemma lay between that old, ancestral Roman religion, now become so incredible to him and the honest action of his own untroubled, unassisted intelligence. Even the *Arcana Celestia* of Platonism —what the sons of Plato had had to say regarding the essential indifference of pure soul to its bodily house and merely occasional dwelling-place—seemed to him while his heart was there in the urn with the material ashes of Flavian, or still lingering in memory over his last agony, wholly inhuman or morose, as tending to alleviate his resentment at nature's wrong. It was to the sentiment of the body, and the affections it defined—the flesh, of whose force and colour that wandering Platonic soul was but so frail a residue or abstract—he must cling. The various pathetic traits of the beloved, suffering, perished body of Flavian, so deeply pondered, had made him a materialist, but with something of the temper of a devotee.

As a consequence it might have seemed at first that his care for poetry had passed away,

to be replaced by the literature of thought. His much-pondered manuscript verses were laid aside ; and what happened now to one, who was certainly to be something of a poet from first to last, looked at the moment like a change from poetry to prose. He came of age about this time, his own master though with beardless face ; and at eighteen, an age at which, then as now, many youths of capacity, who fancied themselves poets, secluded themselves from others chiefly in affectation and vague dreaming, he secluded himself indeed from others, but in a severe intellectual meditation, that salt of poetry, without which all the more serious charm is lacking to the imaginative world. Still with something of the old religious earnestness of his childhood, he set himself—*Sich im Denken zu orientiren*—to determine his bearings, as by compass, in the world of thought—to get that precise acquaintance with the creative intelligence itself, its structure and capacities, its relation to other parts of himself and to other things, without which, certainly, no poetry can be masterly. Like a young man rich in this world's goods coming of age, he must go into affairs, and ascertain his outlook. There must be no disguises. An exact estimate of realities, as towards himself, he must have—a delicately measured gradation of certainty in things—from the distant, haunted horizon of mere surmise or imagination, to the actual

feeling of sorrow in his heart, as he reclined one morning, alone instead of in pleasant company, to ponder the hard sayings of an imperfect old Greek manuscript, unrolled beside him. His former gay companions, meeting him in the streets of the old Italian town, and noting the graver lines coming into the face of the sombre but enthusiastic student of intellectual structure, who could hold his own so well in the society of accomplished older men, were half afraid of him, though proud to have him of their company. Why this reserve?—they asked, concerning the orderly, self-possessed youth, whose speech and carriage seemed so carefully measured, who was surely no poet like the rapt, dishevelled Lupus. Was he secretly in love, perhaps, whose toga was so daintily folded, and who was always as fresh as the flowers he wore; or bent on his own line of ambition: or even on riches?

Marius, meantime, was reading freely, in early morning for the most part, those writers chiefly who had made it their business to know what might be thought concerning that strange, enigmatic, personal essence, which had seemed to go out altogether, along with the funeral fires. And the old Greek who more than any other was now giving form to his thoughts was a very hard master. From Epicurus, from the thunder and lightning of Lucretius—like thunder and lightning some distance off, one might recline to enjoy, in a garden of roses—he had gone back to

the writer who was in a certain sense the teacher of both, Heraclitus of Ionia. His difficult book "Concerning Nature" was even then rare, for people had long since satisfied themselves by the quotation of certain brilliant, isolated, oracles only, out of what was at best a taxing kind of lore. But the difficulty of the early Greek prose did but spur the curiosity of Marius; the writer, the superior clearness of whose intellectual view had so sequestered him from other men, who had had so little joy of that superiority, being avowedly exacting as to the amount of devout attention he required from the student. "The many," he said, always thus emphasising the difference between the many and the few, are "like people heavy with wine," "led by children," "knowing not whither they go;" and yet, "much learning doth not make wise;" and again, "the ass, after all, would have his thistles rather than fine gold."

Heraclitus, indeed, had not under-rated the difficulty for "the many" of the paradox with which his doctrine begins, and the due reception of which must involve a denial of habitual impressions, as the necessary first step in the way of truth. His philosophy had been developed in conscious, outspoken opposition to the current mode of thought, as a matter requiring some exceptional loyalty to pure reason and its "dry light." Men are subject to an illusion, he protests, regarding matters apparent to sense.

What the uncorrected sense gives was a false impression of permanence or fixity in things, which have really changed their nature in the very moment in which we see and touch them. And the radical flaw in the current mode of thinking would lie herein : that, reflecting this false or uncorrected sensation, it attributes to the phenomena of experience a durability which does not really belong to them. Imaging forth from those fluid impressions a world of firmly outlined objects, it leads one to regard as a thing stark and dead what is in reality full of animation, of vigour, of the fire of life—that eternal process of nature, of which at a later time Goethe spoke as the "Living Garment," whereby God is seen of us, ever in weaving at the "Loom of Time."

And the appeal which the old Greek thinker made was, in the first instance, from confused to unconfused sensation ; with a sort of prophetic seriousness, a great claim and assumption, such as we may understand, if we anticipate in this preliminary scepticism the ulterior scope of his speculation, according to which the universal movement of all natural things is but one particular stage, or measure, of that ceaseless activity wherein the divine reason consists. The one true being—that constant subject of all early thought—it was his merit to have conceived, not as sterile and stagnant inaction, but as a perpetual energy, from the restless stream of which,

at certain points, some elements detach themselves, and harden into non-entity and death, corresponding, as outward objects, to man's inward condition of ignorance: that is, to the slowness of his faculties. It is with this paradox of a subtle, perpetual change in all visible things, that the high speculation of Heraclitus begins. Hence the scorn he expresses for anything like a careless, half-conscious, "use-and-wont" reception of our experience, which took so strong a hold on men's memories! Hence those many precepts towards a strenuous self-consciousness in all we think and do, that loyalty to cool and candid reason, which makes strict attentiveness of mind a kind of religious duty and service.

The negative doctrine, then, that the objects of our ordinary experience, fixed as they seem, are really in perpetual change, had been, as originally conceived, but the preliminary step towards a large positive system of almost religious philosophy. Then as now, the illuminated philosophic mind might apprehend, in what seemed a mass of lifeless matter, the movement of that universal life, in which things, and men's impressions of them, were ever "coming to be," alternately consumed and renewed. That continual change, to be discovered by the attentive understanding where common opinion found fixed objects, was but the indicator of a subtler but all-pervading motion—the sleepless, ever-sustained, inexhaustible energy of the divine

reason itself, proceeding always by its own rhythmical logic, and lending to all mind and matter, in turn, what life they had. In this "perpetual flux" of things and of souls, there was, as Heraclitus conceived, a continuance, if not of their material or spiritual elements, yet of orderly intelligible relationships, like the harmony of musical notes, wrought out in and through the series of their mutations—ordinances of the divine reason, maintained throughout the changes of the phenomenal world; and this harmony in their mutation and opposition, was, after all, a principle of sanity, of reality, there. But it happened, that, of all this, the first, merely sceptical or negative step, that easiest step on the threshold, had alone remained in general memory; and the "doctrine of motion" seemed to those who had felt its seduction to make all fixed knowledge impossible. The swift passage of things, the still swifter passage of those modes of our conscious being which seemed to reflect them, might indeed be the burning of the divine fire: but what was ascertained was that they did pass away like a devouring flame, or like the race of water in the mid-stream—too swiftly for any real knowledge of them to be attainable. Heracliteanism had grown to be almost identical with the famous doctrine of the sophist Protagoras, that the momentary, sensible apprehension of the individual was the only standard of what is or is

not, and each one the measure of all things to himself. The impressive name of Heraclitus had become but an authority for a philosophy of the despair of knowledge.

And as it had been with his original followers in Greece, so it happened now with the later Roman disciple. He, too, paused at the apprehension of that constant motion of things—the drift of flowers, of little or great souls, of ambitious systems, in the stream around him, the first source, the ultimate issue, of which, in regions out of sight, must count with him as but a dim problem. The bold mental flight of the old Greek master from the fleeting, competing objects of experience to that one universal life, in which the whole sphere of physical change might be reckoned as but a single pulsation, remained by him as hypothesis only—the hypothesis he actually preferred, as in itself most credible, however scantily realisable even by the imagination—yet still as but one unverified hypothesis, among many others, concerning the first principle of things. He might reserve it as a fine, high, visionary consideration, very remote upon the intellectual ladder, just at the point, indeed, where that ladder seemed to pass into the clouds, but for which there was certainly no time left just now by his eager interest in the real objects so close to him, on the lowlier earthy steps nearest the ground. And those childish days of reverie,

when he played at priests, played in many another day-dream, working his way from the actual present, as far as he might, with a delightful sense of escape in replacing the outer world of other people by an inward world as himself really cared to have it, had made him a kind of "idealist." He was become aware of the possibility of a large dissidence between an inward and somewhat exclusive world of vivid personal apprehension, and the unimproved, unheightened reality of the life of those about him. As a consequence, he was ready now to concede, somewhat more easily than others, the first point of his new lesson, that the individual is to himself the measure of all things, and to rely on the exclusive certainty to himself of his own impressions. To move afterwards in that outer world of other people, as though taking it at their estimate, would be possible henceforth only as a kind of irony. And as with the *Vicaire Savoyard*, after reflecting on the variations of philosophy, "the first fruit he drew from that reflection was the lesson of a limitation of his researches to what immediately interested him ; to rest peacefully in a profound ignorance as to all beside ; to disquiet himself only concerning those things which it was of import for him to know." At least he would entertain no theory of conduct which did not allow its due weight to this primary element of incertitude or negation, in the conditions of man's life.

Just here he joined company, retracing in his individual mental pilgrimage the historic order of human thought, with another wayfarer on the journey, another ancient Greek master, the founder of the Cyrenaic philosophy, whose weighty traditional utterances (for he had left no writing) served in turn to give effective outline to the contemplations of Marius. There was something in the doctrine itself congruous with the place wherein it had its birth; and for a time Marius lived much, mentally, in the brilliant Greek colony which had given a dubious name to the philosophy of pleasure. It hung, for his fancy, between the mountains and the sea, among richer than Italian gardens, on a certain breezy table-land projecting from the African coast, some hundreds of miles southward from Greece. There, in a delightful climate, with something of transalpine temperance amid its luxury, and withal in an inward atmosphere of temperance which did but further enhance the brilliancy of human life, the school of Cyrene had maintained itself as almost one with the family of its founder; certainly as nothing coarse or unclean, and under the influence of accomplished women.

Aristippus of Cyrene too had left off in suspense of judgment as to what might really lie behind—*flammantia mœnia mundi:* the flaming ramparts of the world. Those strange, bold, sceptical surmises, which had haunted the minds

of the first Greek enquirers as merely abstract doubt, which had been present to the mind of Heraclitus as one element only in a system of abstract philosophy, became with Aristippus a very subtly practical worldly-wisdom. The difference between him and those obscure earlier thinkers is almost like that between an ancient thinker generally, and a modern man of the world: it was the difference between the mystic in his cell, or the prophet in the desert, and the expert, cosmopolitan, administrator of his dark sayings, translating the abstract thoughts of the master into terms, first of all, of *sentiment*. It has been sometimes seen, in the history of the human mind, that when thus translated into terms of sentiment—of sentiment, as lying already half-way towards practice—the abstract ideas of metaphysics for the first time reveal their true significance. The metaphysical principle, in itself, as it were, without hands or feet, becomes impressive, fascinating, of effect, when translated into a precept as to how it were best to feel and act; in other words, under its sentimental or ethical equivalent. The leading idea of the great master of Cyrene, his theory that things are but shadows, and that we, even as they, never continue in one stay, might indeed have taken effect as a languid, enervating, consumptive nihilism, as a precept of "renunciation," which would touch and handle and busy itself with nothing. But in the reception of

metaphysical *formulæ*, all depends, as regards their actual and ulterior result, on the pre-existent qualities of that soil of human nature into which they fall—the company they find already present there, on their admission into the house of thought; there being at least so much truth as this involves in the theological maxim, that the reception of this or that speculative conclusion is really a matter of will. The persuasion that all is vanity, with this happily constituted Greek, who had been a genuine disciple of Socrates and reflected, presumably, something of his blitheness in the face of the world, his happy way of taking all chances, generated neither frivolity nor sourness, but induced, rather, an impression, just serious enough, of the call upon men's attention of the crisis in which they find themselves. It became the stimulus towards every kind of activity, and prompted a perpetual, inextinguishable thirst after experience.

With Marius, then, the influence of the philosopher of pleasure depended on this, that in him an abstract doctrine, originally somewhat acrid, had fallen upon a rich and genial nature, well fitted to transform it into a theory of practice, of considerable stimulative power towards a fair life. What Marius saw in him was the spectacle of one of the happiest temperaments coming, so to speak, to an understanding with the most depressing of theories; accepting the

results of a metaphysical system which seemed to concentrate into itself all the weakening trains of thought in earlier Greek speculation, and making the best of it; turning its hard, bare truths, with wonderful tact, into precepts of grace, and delicate wisdom, and a delicate sense of honour. Given the hardest terms, supposing our days are indeed but a shadow, even so, we may well adorn and beautify, in scrupulous self-respect, our souls, and whatever our souls touch upon—these wonderful bodies, these material dwelling-places through which the shadows pass together for a while, the very raiment we wear, our very pastimes and the intercourse of society. The most discerning judges saw in him something like the graceful "humanities" of the later Roman, and our modern "culture," as it is termed; while Horace recalled his sayings as expressing best his own consummate amenity in the reception of life.

In this way, for Marius, under the guidance of that old master of decorous living, those eternal doubts as to the *criteria* of truth reduced themselves to a scepticism almost drily practical, a scepticism which developed the opposition between things as they are and our impressions and thoughts concerning them—the possibility, if an outward world does really exist, of some faultiness in our apprehension of it—the doctrine, in short, of what is termed "the subjectivity of knowledge." That is a consideration, indeed,

which lies as an element of weakness, like some admitted fault or flaw, at the very foundation of every philosophical account of the universe; which confronts all philosophies at their starting, but with which none have really dealt conclusively, some perhaps not quite sincerely; which those who are not philosophers dissipate by "common," but unphilosophical, sense, or by religious faith. The peculiar strength of Marius was, to have apprehended this weakness on the threshold of human knowledge, in the whole range of its consequences. Our knowledge is limited to what we feel, he reflected: we need no proof that we feel. But can we be sure that things are at all like our feelings? Mere peculiarities in the instruments of our cognition, like the little knots and waves on the surface of a mirror, may distort the matter they seem but to represent. Of other people we cannot truly know even the feelings, nor how far they would indicate the same modifications, each one of a personality really unique, in using the same terms as ourselves; that "common experience," which is sometimes proposed as a satisfactory basis of certainty, being after all only a fixity of language. But our own impressions!—The light and heat of that blue veil over our heads, the heavens spread out, perhaps *not* like a curtain over anything!—How reassuring, after so long a debate about the rival *criteria* of truth, to fall back upon direct sensation, to limit one's

aspirations after knowledge to that! In an age still materially so brilliant, so expert in the artistic handling of material things, with sensible capacities still in undiminished vigour, with the whole world of classic art and poetry outspread before it, and where there was more than eye or ear could well take in—how natural the determination to rely exclusively upon the phenomena of the senses, which certainly never deceive us about themselves, about which alone we can never deceive ourselves!

And so the abstract apprehension that the little point of this present moment alone really is, between a past which has just ceased to be and a future which may never come, became practical with Marius, under the form of a resolve, as far as possible, to exclude regret and desire, and yield himself to the improvement of the present with an absolutely disengaged mind. *America is here and now—here, or nowhere:* as Wilhelm Meister finds out one day, just not too late, after so long looking vaguely across the ocean for the opportunity of the development of his capacities. It was as if, recognising in perpetual motion the law of nature, Marius identified his own way of life cordially with it, "throwing himself into the stream," so to speak. He too must maintain a harmony with that soul of motion in things, by constantly renewed mobility of character.

Omnis Aristippum decuit color et status et res.—

Thus Horace had summed up that perfect manner in the reception of life attained by his old Cyrenaic master ; and the first practical consequence of the metaphysic which lay behind that perfect manner, had been a strict limitation, almost the renunciation, of metaphysical enquiry itself. Metaphysic—that art, as it has so often proved, in the words of Michelet, *de s'égarer avec méthode*, of bewildering oneself methodically :—one must spend little time upon that ! In the school of Cyrene, great as was its mental incisiveness, logical and physical speculation, theoretic interests generally, had been valued only so far as they served to give a groundwork, an intellectual justification, to that exclusive concern with practical ethics which was a note of the Cyrenaic philosophy. How earnest and enthusiastic, how true to itself, under how many varieties of character, had been the effort of the Greeks after Theory—*Theôria*—that vision of a wholly reasonable world, which, according to the greatest of them, literally makes man like God : how loyally they had still persisted in the quest after that, in spite of how many disappointments ! In the Gospel of Saint John, perhaps, some of them might have found the kind of vision they were seeking for ; but not in "doubtful disputations" concerning "being" and "not-being," knowledge and appearance. Men's minds, even young men's minds, at that late day, might well seem oppressed by the weariness of systems which

had so far outrun positive knowledge; and in the mind of Marius, as in that old school of Cyrene, this sense of *ennui*, combined with appetites so youthfully vigorous, brought about reaction, a sort of suicide (instances of the like have been seen since) by which a great metaphysical *acumen* was devoted to the function of proving metaphysical speculation impossible, or useless. Abstract theory was to be valued only just so far as it might serve to clear the tablet of the mind from suppositions no more than half realisable, or wholly visionary, leaving it in flawless evenness of surface to the impressions of an experience, concrete and direct.

To be absolutely virgin towards such experience, by ridding ourselves of such abstractions as are but the ghosts of bygone impressions —to be rid of the notions we have made for ourselves, and that so often only misrepresent the experience of which they profess to be the representation—*idola*, idols, false appearances, as Bacon calls them later—to neutralise the distorting influence of metaphysical system by an all-accomplished metaphysic skill: it is this bold, hard, sober recognition, under a very "dry light," of its own proper aim, in union with a habit of feeling which on the practical side may perhaps open a wide doorway to human weakness, that gives to the Cyrenaic doctrine, to reproductions of this doctrine in the time of Marius or in our own, their gravity and importance. It was a

school to which the young man might come, eager for truth, expecting much from philosophy, in no ignoble curiosity, aspiring after nothing less than an "initiation." He would be sent back, sooner or later, to experience, to the world of concrete impressions, to things as they may be seen, heard, felt by him; but with a wonderful machinery of observation, and free from the tyranny of mere theories.

So, in intervals of repose, after the agitation which followed the death of Flavian, the thoughts of Marius ran, while he felt himself as if returned to the fine, clear, peaceful light of that pleasant school of healthfully sensuous wisdom, in the brilliant old Greek colony, on its fresh upland by the sea. Not pleasure, but a general completeness of life, was the practical ideal to which this anti-metaphysical metaphysic really pointed. And towards such a full or complete life, a life of various yet select sensation, the most direct and effective auxiliary must be, in a word, Insight. Liberty of soul, freedom from all partial and misrepresentative doctrine which does but relieve one element in our experience at the cost of another, freedom from all embarrassment alike of regret for the past and of calculation on the future: this would be but preliminary to the real business of education — insight, insight through culture, into all that the present moment holds in trust for us, as we stand so briefly in its presence. From that maxim of

Life as the end of life, followed, as a practical consequence, the desirableness of refining all the instruments of inward and outward intuition, of developing all their capacities, of testing and exercising one's self in them, till one's whole nature became one complex medium of reception, towards the vision—the "beatific vision," if we really cared to make it such—of our actual experience in the world. Not the conveyance of an abstract body of truths or principles, would be the aim of the right education of one's self, or of another, but the conveyance of an art—an art in some degree peculiar to each individual character; with the modifications, that is, due to its special constitution, and the peculiar circumstances of its growth, inasmuch as no one of us is "like another, all in all.

CHAPTER IX

NEW CYRENAICISM

Such were the practical conclusions drawn for himself by Marius, when somewhat later he had outgrown the mastery of others, from the principle that "all is vanity." If he could but count upon the present, if a life brief at best could not certainly be shown to conduct one anywhere beyond itself, if men's highest curiosity was indeed so persistently baffled—then, with the Cyrenaics of all ages, he would at least fill up the measure of that present with vivid sensations, and such intellectual apprehensions, as, in strength and directness and their immediately realised values at the bar of an actual experience, are most like sensations. So some have spoken in every age; for, like all theories which really express a strong natural tendency of the human mind or even one of its characteristic modes of weakness, this vein of reflection is a constant tradition in philosophy. Every age of European thought has had its Cyrenaics or Epicureans, under many disguises: even under the hood of the monk.

But—*Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die!* —is a proposal, the real import of which differs immensely, according to the natural taste, and the acquired judgment, of the guests who sit at the table. It may express nothing better than the instinct of Dante's Ciacco, the accomplished glutton, in the mud of the *Inferno;* or, since on no hypothesis does man "live by bread alone," may come to be identical with—"My meat is to do what is just and kind;" while the soul, which can make no sincere claim to have apprehended anything beyond the veil of immediate experience, yet never loses a sense of happiness in conforming to the highest moral ideal it can clearly define for itself; and actually, though but with so faint hope, does the "Father's business."

In that age of Marcus Aurelius, so completely disabused of the metaphysical ambition to pass beyond "the flaming ramparts of the world," but, on the other hand, possessed of so vast an accumulation of intellectual treasure, with so wide a view before it over all varieties of what is powerful or attractive in man and his works, the thoughts of Marius did but follow the line taken by the majority of educated persons, though to a different issue. Pitched to a really high and serious key, the precept—*Be perfect in regard to what is here and now:* the precept of "culture," as it is called, or of a complete education—might at least save him from the vulgarity and heavi-

ness of a generation, certainly of no general fineness of temper, though with a material well-being abundant enough. Conceded that what is secure in our existence is but the sharp apex of the present moment between two hypothetical eternities, and all that is real in our experience but a series of fleeting impressions :—so Marius continued the sceptical argument he had condensed, as the matter to hold by, from his various philosophical reading :—given, that we are never to get beyond the walls of the closely shut cell of one's own personality ; that the ideas we are somehow impelled to form of an outer world, and of other minds akin to our own, are, it may be, but a day-dream, and the thought of any world beyond, a day-dream perhaps idler still : then, he, at least, in whom those fleeting impressions—faces, voices, material sunshine—were very real and imperious, might well set himself to the consideration, how such actual moments as they passed might be made to yield their utmost, by the most dexterous training of capacity. Amid abstract metaphysical doubts, as to what might lie one step only beyond that experience, reinforcing the deep original materialism or earthliness of human nature itself, bound so intimately to the sensuous world, let him at least make the most of what was "here and now." In the actual dimness of ways from means to ends —ends in themselves desirable, yet for the most part distant and for him, certainly, below the

visible horizon—he would at all events be sure that the means, to use the well-worn terminology, should have something of finality or perfection about them, and themselves partake, in a measure, of the more excellent nature of ends—that the means should justify the end.

With this view he would demand culture, παιδεία, as the Cyrenaics said, or, in other words, a wide, a complete, education—an education partly negative, as ascertaining the true limits of man's capacities, but for the most part positive, and directed especially to the expansion and refinement of the power of reception; of those powers, above all, which are immediately relative to fleeting phenomena, the powers of emotion and sense. In such an education, an "æsthetic" education, as it might now be termed, and certainly occupied very largely with those aspects of things which affect us pleasurably through sensation, art, of course, including all the finer sorts of literature, would have a great part to play. The study of music, in that wider Platonic sense, according to which, *music* comprehends all those matters over which the Muses of Greek mythology preside, would conduct one to an exquisite appreciation of all the finer traits of nature and of man. Nay! the products of the imagination must themselves be held to present the most perfect forms of life—spirit and matter alike under their purest and most perfect conditions—the most strictly appro-

priate objects of that impassioned contemplation, which, in the world of intellectual discipline, as in the highest forms of morality and religion, must be held to be the essential function of the "perfect." Such manner of life might come even to seem a kind of religion—an inward, visionary, mystic piety, or religion, by virtue of its effort to live days "lovely and pleasant" in themselves, here and now, and with an all-sufficiency of well-being in the immediate sense of the object contemplated, independently of any faith, or hope that might be entertained as to their ulterior tendency. In this way, the true æsthetic culture would be realisable as a new form of the contemplative life, founding its claim on the intrinsic "blessedness" of "vision" —the vision of perfect men and things. One's human nature, indeed, would fain reckon on an assured and endless future, pleasing itself with the dream of a final home, to be attained at some still remote date, yet with a conscious, delightful home-coming at last, as depicted in many an old poetic Elysium. On the other hand, the world of perfected sensation, intelligence, emotion, is so close to us, and so attractive, that the most visionary of spirits must needs represent the world unseen in colours, and under a form really borrowed from it. Let me be sure then—might he not plausibly say?—that I miss no detail of this life of realised consciousness in the present! Here at least is a vision, a theory,

θεωρία, which reposes on no basis of unverified hypothesis, which makes no call upon a future after all somewhat problematic; as it would be unaffected by any discovery of an Empedocles (improving on the old story of Prometheus) as to what had really been the origin, and course of development, of man's actually attained faculties and that seemingly divine particle of reason or spirit in him. Such a doctrine, at more leisurable moments, would of course have its precepts to deliver on the embellishment, generally, of what is near at hand, on the adornment of life, till, in a not impracticable rule of conduct, one's existence, from day to day, came to be like a well-executed piece of music; that "perpetual motion" in things (so Marius figured the matter to himself, under the old Greek imageries) according itself to a kind of cadence or harmony.

It was intelligible that this "æsthetic" philosophy might find itself (theoretically, at least, and by way of a curious question in casuistry, legitimate from its own point of view) weighing the claims of that eager, concentrated, impassioned realisation of experience, against those of the received morality. Conceiving its own function in a somewhat desperate temper, and becoming, as every high-strung form of sentiment, as the religious sentiment itself, may become, somewhat antinomian, when, in its effort towards the order of experiences it prefers, it is confronted with the traditional and popular

morality, at points where that morality may look very like a convention, or a mere stage-property of the world, it would be found, from time to time, breaking beyond the limits of the actual moral order; perhaps not without some pleasurable excitement in so bold a venture.

With the possibility of some such hazard as this, in thought or even in practice—that it might be, though refining, or tonic even, in the case of those strong and in health, yet, as Pascal says of the kindly and temperate wisdom of Montaigne, "pernicious for those who have any natural tendency to impiety or vice," the line of reflection traced out above, was fairly chargeable.—Not, however, with "hedonism" and its supposed consequences. The blood, the heart, of Marius were still pure. He knew that his carefully considered theory of practice braced him, with the effect of a moral principle duly recurring to mind every morning, towards the work of a student, for which he might seem intended. Yet there were some among his acquaintance who jumped to the conclusion that, with the "Epicurean stye," he was making pleasure—pleasure, as they so poorly conceived it—the sole motive of life; and they precluded any exacter estimate of the situation by covering it with a high-sounding general term, through the vagueness of which they were enabled to see the severe and laborious youth in the vulgar company of Lais. Words like "hedonism"—

terms of large and vague comprehension—above all when used for a purpose avowedly controversial, have ever been the worst examples of what are called "question-begging terms;" and in that late age in which Marius lived, amid the dust of so many centuries of philosophical debate, the air was full of them. Yet those who used that reproachful Greek term for the philosophy of pleasure, were hardly more likely than the old Greeks themselves (on whom regarding this very subject of the theory of pleasure, their masters in the art of thinking had so emphatically to impress the necessity of "making distinctions") to come to any very delicately correct ethical conclusions by a reasoning, which began with a general term, comprehensive enough to cover pleasures so different in quality, in their causes and effects, as the pleasures of wine and love, of art and science, of religious enthusiasm and political enterprise, and of that taste or curiosity which satisfied itself with long days of serious study. Yet, in truth, each of those pleasurable modes of activity, may, in its turn, fairly become the ideal of the "hedonistic" doctrine. Really, to the phase of reflection through which Marius was then passing, the charge of "hedonism," whatever its true weight might be, was not properly applicable at all. Not pleasure, but fulness of life, and "insight" as conducting to that fulness—energy, variety, and choice of experience, includ-

ing noble pain and sorrow even, loves such as those in the exquisite old story of Apuleius, sincere and strenuous forms of the moral life, such as Seneca and Epictetus—whatever form of human life, in short, might be heroic, impassioned, ideal: from these the "new Cyrenaicism" of Marius took its criterion of values. It was a theory, indeed, which might properly be regarded as in great degree coincident with the main principle of the Stoics themselves, and an older version of the precept "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might"—a doctrine so widely acceptable among the nobler spirits of that time. And, as with that, its mistaken tendency would lie in the direction of a kind of idolatry of mere life, or natural gift, or strength—*l'idôlatrie des talents*.

To understand the various forms of ancient art and thought, the various forms of actual human feeling (the only new thing, in a world almost too opulent in what was old) to satisfy, with a kind of scrupulous equity, the claims of these concrete and actual objects on his sympathy, his intelligence, his senses—to "pluck out the heart of their mystery," and in turn become the interpreter of them to others: this had now defined itself for Marius as a very narrowly practical design: it determined his choice of a vocation to live by. It was the era of the *rhetoricians*, or *sophists*, as they were sometimes called; of men who came in some instances to

great fame and fortune, by way of a literary cultivation of "science." That science, it has been often said, must have been wholly an affair of words. But in a world, confessedly so opulent in what was old, the work, even of genius, must necessarily consist very much in criticism ; and, in the case of the more excellent specimens of his class, the rhetorician was, after all, the eloquent and effective interpreter, for the delighted ears of others, of what understanding himself had come by, in years of travel and study, of the beautiful house of art and thought which was the inheritance of the age. The emperor Marcus Aurelius, to whose service Marius had now been called, was himself, more or less openly, a "lecturer." That late world, amid many curiously vivid modern traits, had this spectacle, so familiar to ourselves, of the public lecturer or essayist ; in some cases adding to his other gifts that of the Christian preacher, who knows how to touch people's sensibilities on behalf of the suffering. To follow in the way of these successes, was the natural instinct of youthful ambition ; and it was with no vulgar egotism that Marius, at the age of nineteen, determined, like many another young man of parts, to enter as a student of rhetoric at Rome.

Though the manner of his work was changed formally from poetry to prose, he remained, and must always be, of the poetic temper : by which, I mean, among other things, that quite

independently of the general habit of that pensive age he lived much, and as it were by system, in reminiscence. Amid his eager grasping at the sensation, the consciousness, of the present, he had come to see that, after all, the main point of economy in the conduct of the present, was the question :—How will it look to me, at what shall I value it, this day next year? —that in any given day or month one's main concern was its impression for the memory. A strange trick memory sometimes played him; for, with no natural gradation, what was of last month, or of yesterday, of to-day even, would seem as far off, as entirely detached from him, as things of ten years ago. Detached from him, yet very real, there lay certain spaces of his life, in delicate perspective, under a favourable light; and, somehow, all the less fortunate detail and circumstance had parted from them. Such hours were oftenest those in which he had been helped by work of others to the pleasurable apprehension of art, of nature, or of life. "Not what I do, but what I am, under the power of this vision"—he would say to himself—"is what were indeed pleasing to the gods!"

And yet, with a kind of inconsistency in one who had taken for his philosophic ideal the μονόχρονος ἡδονή of Aristippus—the pleasure of the ideal present, of the mystic *now*—there would come, together with that precipitate sinking of things into the past, a desire, after all,

to retain "what was so transitive." Could he but arrest, for others also, certain clauses of experience, as the imaginative memory presented them to himself! In those grand, hot summers, he would have imprisoned the very perfume of the flowers. To create, to live, perhaps, a little while beyond the allotted hours, if it were but in a fragment of perfect expression: —it was thus his longing defined itself for something to hold by amid the "perpetual flux." With men of his vocation, people were apt to say, words were things. Well! with him, words should be indeed things,—the word, the phrase, valuable in exact proportion to the transparency with which it conveyed to others the apprehension, the emotion, the mood, so vividly real within himself. *Verbaque provisam rem non invita sequentur:* Virile apprehension of the true nature of things, of the true nature of one's own impression, first of all!—words would follow that naturally, a true understanding of one's self being ever the first condition of genuine style. Language delicate and measured, the delicate Attic phrase, for instance, in which the eminent Aristeides could speak, was then a power to which people's hearts, and sometimes even their purses, readily responded. And there were many points, as Marius thought, on which the heart of that age greatly needed to be touched. He hardly knew how strong that old religious sense of responsibility, the conscience, as we call it,

still was within him—a body of inward impressions, as real as those so highly valued outward ones—to offend against which, brought with it a strange feeling of disloyalty, as to a person. And the determination, adhered to with no misgiving, to add nothing, not so much as a transient sigh, to the great total of men's unhappiness, in his way through the world:—that too was something to rest on, in the drift of mere "appearances."

All this would involve a life of industry, of industrious study, only possible through healthy rule, keeping clear the eye alike of body and soul. For the male element, the logical conscience asserted itself now, with opening manhood—asserted itself, even in his literary style, by a certain firmness of outline, that touch of the worker in metal, amid its richness. Already he blamed instinctively alike in his work and in himself, as youth so seldom does, all that had not passed a long and liberal process of erasure. The happy phrase or sentence was really modelled upon a cleanly finished structure of scrupulous thought. The suggestive force of the one master of his development, who had battled so hard with imaginative prose; the utterance, the golden utterance, of the other, so content with its living power of persuasion that he had never written at all,—in the commixture of these two qualities he set up his literary ideal, and this rare blending of grace with an in-

tellectual rigour or astringency, was the secret of a singular expressiveness in it.

He acquired at this time a certain bookish air, the somewhat sombre habitude of the avowed scholar, which though it never interfered with the perfect tone, "fresh and serenely disposed," of the Roman gentleman, yet qualified it as by an interesting oblique trait, and frightened away some of his equals in age and rank. The sober discretion of his thoughts, his sustained habit of meditation, the sense of those negative conclusions enabling him to concentrate himself, with an absorption so entire, upon what is immediately *here* and *now*, gave him a peculiar manner of intellectual confidence, as of one who had indeed been initiated into a great secret.—Though with an air so disengaged, he seemed to be living so intently in the visible world! And now, in revolt against that pre-occupation with other persons, which had so often perturbed his spirit, his wistful speculations as to what the real, the greater, experience might be, determined in him, not as the longing for love—to be with Cynthia, or Aspasia—but as a thirst for existence in exquisite places. The veil that was to be lifted for him lay over the works of the old masters of art, in places where nature also had used her mastery. And it was just at this moment that a summons to Rome reached him.

CHAPTER X

ON THE WAY

Mirum est ut animus agitatione motuque corporis excitetur.
Pliny's Letters.

MANY points in that train of thought, its harder and more energetic practical details especially, at first surmised but vaguely in the intervals of his visits to the tomb of Flavian, attained the coherence of formal principle amid the stirring incidents of the journey, which took him, still in all the buoyancy of his nineteen years and greatly expectant, to Rome. That summons had come from one of the former friends of his father in the capital, who had kept himself acquainted with the lad's progress, and, assured of his parts, his courtly ways, above all of his beautiful penmanship, now offered him a place, virtually that of an *amanuensis*, near the person of the philosophic emperor. The old town-house of his family on the Cælian hill, so long neglected, might well require his personal care; and Marius, relieved a little by his preparations for travelling from a certain over-tension

of spirit in which he had lived of late, was presently on his way, to await introduction to Aurelius, on his expected return home, after a first success, illusive enough as it was soon to appear, against the invaders from beyond the Danube.

The opening stage of his journey, through the firm, golden weather, for which he had lingered three days beyond the appointed time of starting—days brown with the first rains of autumn—brought him, by the byways among the lower slopes of the Apennines of Luna, to the town of Luca, a station on the Cassian Way; travelling so far mainly on foot, while the baggage followed under the care of his attendants. He wore a broad felt hat, in fashion not unlike a more modern pilgrim's, the neat head projecting from the collar of his gray *pænula*, or travelling mantle, sewed closely together over the breast, but with its two sides folded up upon the shoulders, to leave the arms free in walking, and was altogether so trim and fresh, that, as he climbed the hill from Pisa, by the long steep lane through the olive-yards, and turned to gaze where he could just discern the cypresses of the old school garden, like two black lines down the yellow walls, a little child took possession of his hand, and, looking up at him with entire confidence, paced on bravely at his side, for the mere pleasure of his company, to the spot where the road declined again

into the valley beyond. From this point, leaving the servants behind, he surrendered himself, a willing subject, as he walked, to the impressions of the road, and was almost surprised, both at the suddenness with which evening came on, and the distance from his old home at which it found him.

And at the little town of Luca, he felt that indescribable sense of a welcoming in the mere outward appearance of things, which seems to mark out certain places for the special purpose of evening rest, and gives them always a peculiar amiability in retrospect. Under the deepening twilight, the rough-tiled roofs seem to huddle together side by side, like one continuous shelter over the whole township, spread low and broad above the snug sleeping-rooms within; and the place one sees for the first time, and must tarry in but for a night, breathes the very spirit of home. The cottagers lingered at their doors for a few minutes as the shadows grew larger, and went to rest early; though there was still a glow along the road through the shorn cornfields, and the birds were still awake about the crumbling gray heights of an old temple. So quiet and air-swept was the place, you could hardly tell where the country left off in it, and the field-paths became its streets. Next morning he must needs change the manner of his journey. The light baggage-wagon returned, and he proceeded now more quickly, travelling

a stage or two by post, along the Cassian Way, where the figures and incidents of the great high-road seemed already to tell of the capital, the one centre to which all were hastening, or had lately bidden adieu. That *Way* lay through the heart of the old, mysterious and visionary country of Etruria; and what he knew of its strange religion of the dead, reinforced by the actual sight of the funeral houses scattered so plentifully among the dwelling-places of the living, revived in him for a while, in all its strength, his old instinctive yearning towards those inhabitants of the shadowy land he had known in life. It seemed to him that he could half divine how time passed in those painted houses on the hillsides, among the gold and silver ornaments, the wrought armour and vestments, the drowsy and dead attendants; and the close consciousness of that vast population gave him no fear, but rather a sense of companionship, as he climbed the hills on foot behind the horses, through the genial afternoon.

The road, next day, passed below a town not less primitive, it might seem, than its rocky perch—white rocks, that had long been glistening before him in the distance. Down the dewy paths the people were descending from it, to keep a holiday, high and low alike in rough, white-linen smocks. A homely old play was just begun in an open-air theatre, with seats hollowed out of the turf-grown slope. Marius

caught the terrified expression of a child in its mother's arms, as it turned from the yawning mouth of a great mask, for refuge in her bosom. The way mounted, and descended again, down the steep street of another place, all resounding with the noise of metal under the hammer; for every house had its brazier's workshop, the bright objects of brass and copper gleaming, like lights in a cave, out of their dark roofs and corners. Around the anvils the children were watching the work, or ran to fetch water to the hissing, red-hot metal; and Marius too watched, as he took his hasty mid-day refreshment, a mess of chestnut-meal and cheese, while the swelling surface of a great copper water-vessel grew flowered all over with tiny petals under the skilful strokes. Towards dusk, a frantic woman at the roadside, stood and cried out the words of some philter, or malison, in verse, with weird motion of her hands, as the travellers passed, like a wild picture drawn from Virgil.

But all along, accompanying the superficial grace of these incidents of the way, Marius noted, more and more as he drew nearer to Rome, marks of the great plague. Under Hadrian and his successors, there had been many enactments to improve the condition of the slave. The *ergastula* were abolished. But no system of free labour had as yet succeeded. A whole mendicant population, artfully exaggerating every symptom and circumstance of misery, still hung

around, or sheltered themselves within, the vast walls of their old, half-ruined task-houses. And for the most part they had been variously stricken by the pestilence. For once, the heroic level had been reached in rags, squints, scars—every caricature of the human type—ravaged beyond what could have been thought possible if it were to survive at all. Meantime, the farms were less carefully tended than of old : here and there they were lapsing into their natural wildness : some villas also were partly fallen into ruin. The picturesque, romantic Italy of a later time —the Italy of Claude and Salvator Rosa—was already forming, for the delight of the modern romantic traveller.

And again Marius was aware of a real change in things, on crossing the Tiber, as if some magic effect lay in that ; though here, in truth, the Tiber was but a modest enough stream of turbid water. Nature, under the richer sky, seemed readier and more affluent, and man fitter to the conditions around him : even in people hard at work there appeared to be a less burdensome sense of the mere business of life. How dreamily the women were passing up through the broad light and shadow of the steep streets with the great water-pots resting on their heads, like women of Caryæ, set free from slavery in old Greek temples. With what a fresh, primeval poetry was daily existence here impressed—all the details of the threshing-floor and the vine-

yard ; the common farm-life even ; the great bakers' fires aglow upon the road in the evening. In the presence of all this Marius felt for a moment like those old, early, unconscious poets, who created the famous Greek myths of Dionysus, and the Great Mother, out of the imagery of the wine-press and the ploughshare. And still the motion of the journey was bringing his thoughts to systematic form. He seemed to have grown to the fulness of intellectual manhood, on his way hither. The formative and literary stimulus, so to call it, of peaceful exercise which he had always observed in himself, doing its utmost now, the form and the matter of thought alike detached themselves clearly and with readiness from the healthfully excited brain. —" It is wonderful," says Pliny, " how the mind is stirred to activity by brisk bodily exercise." The presentable aspects of inmost thought and feeling became evident to him : the structure of all he meant, its order and outline, defined itself : his general sense of a fitness and beauty in words became effective in daintily pliant sentences, with all sorts of felicitous linking of figure to abstraction. It seemed just then as if the desire of the artist in him—that old longing to produce—might be satisfied by the exact and literal transcript of what was then passing around him, in simple prose, arresting the desirable moment as it passed, and prolonging its life a little.—To live in the concrete ! To be sure, at least, of

one's hold upon that !—Again, his philosophic scheme was but the reflection of the *data* of sense, and chiefly of sight, a reduction to the abstract, of the brilliant road he travelled on, through the sunshine.

But on the seventh evening there came a reaction in the cheerful flow of our traveller's thoughts, a reaction with which mere bodily fatigue, asserting itself at last over his curiosity, had much to do ; and he fell into a mood, known to all passably sentimental wayfarers, as night deepens again and again over their path, in which all journeying, from the known to the unknown, comes suddenly to figure as a mere foolish truancy—like a child's running away from home —with the feeling that one had best return at once, even through the darkness. He had chosen to climb on foot, at his leisure, the long windings by which the road ascended to the place where that day's stage was to end, and found himself alone in the twilight, far behind the rest of his travelling-companions. Would the last zigzag, round and round those dark masses, half natural rock, half artificial sub-structure, ever bring him within the circuit of the walls above ? It was now that a startling incident turned those misgivings almost into actual fear. From the steep slope a heavy mass of stone was detached, after some whisperings among the trees above his head, and rushing down through the stillness fell to pieces in a

cloud of dust across the road just behind him, so that he felt the touch upon his heel. That was sufficient, just then, to rouse out of its hiding-place his old vague fear of evil — of one's "enemies"—a distress, so much a matter of constitution with him, that at times it would seem that the best pleasures of life could but be snatched, as it were hastily, in one moment's forgetfulness of its dark, besetting influence. A sudden suspicion of hatred against him, of the nearness of "enemies," seemed all at once to alter the visible form of things, as with the child's hero, when he found the footprint on the sand of his peaceful, dreamy island. His elaborate philosophy had not put beneath his feet the terror of mere bodily evil; much less of "inexorable fate, and the noise of greedy Acheron."

The resting-place to which he presently came, in the keen, wholesome air of the market-place of the little hill-town, was a pleasant contrast to that last effort of his journey. The room in which he sat down to supper, unlike the ordinary Roman inns at that day, was trim and sweet. The firelight danced cheerfully upon the polished, three-wicked *lucernæ* burning cleanly with the best oil, upon the white-washed walls, and the bunches of scarlet carnations set in glass goblets. The white wine of the place put before him, of the true colour and flavour of the grape, and with a ring of delicate foam as it mounted in the cup, had a reviving edge or freshness he had

found in no other wine. These things had relieved a little the melancholy of the hour before ; and it was just then that he heard the voice of one, newly arrived at the inn, making his way to the upper floor—a youthful voice, with a reassuring clearness of note, which completed his cure.

He seemed to hear that voice again in dreams, uttering his name : then, awake in the full morning light and gazing from the window, saw the guest of the night before, a very honourable-looking youth, in the rich habit of a military knight, standing beside his horse, and already making preparations to depart. It happened that Marius, too, was to take that day's journey on horseback. Riding presently from the inn, he overtook Cornelius—of the Twelfth Legion—advancing carefully down the steep street ; and before they had issued from the gates of *Urbs-vetus*, the two young men had broken into talk together. They were passing along the street of the goldsmiths ; and Cornelius must needs enter one of the workshops for the repair of some button or link of his knightly trappings. Standing in the doorway, Marius watched the work, as he had watched the brazier's business a few days before, wondering most at the simplicity of its processes, a simplicity, however, on which only genius in that craft could have lighted.—By what unguessed-at stroke of hand, for instance, had the grains of precious metal associated them-

selves with so daintily regular a roughness, over the surface of the little casket yonder? And the conversation which followed, hence arising, left the two travellers with sufficient interest in each other to insure an easy companionship for the remainder of their journey. In time to come, Marius was to depend very much on the preferences, the personal judgments, of the comrade who now laid his hand so brotherly on his shoulder, as they left the workshop.

Itineris matutini gratiam capimus,—observes one of our scholarly travellers; and their road that day lay through a country, well-fitted, by the peculiarity of its landscape, to ripen a first acquaintance into intimacy; its superficial ugliness throwing the wayfarers back upon each other's entertainment in a real exchange of ideas, the tension of which, however, it would relieve, ever and anon, by the unexpected assertion of something singularly attractive. The immediate aspect of the land was, indeed, in spite of abundant olive and ilex, unpleasing enough. A river of clay seemed, "in some old night of time," to have burst up over valley and hill, and hardened there into fantastic shelves and slides and angles of cadaverous rock, up and down among the contorted vegetation; the hoary roots and trunks seeming to confess some weird kinship with them. But that was long ago; and these pallid hillsides needed only the declining sun, touching the rock with purple, and throwing deeper shadow into

the immemorial foliage, to put on a peculiar, because a very grave and austere, kind of beauty ; while the graceful outlines common to volcanic hills asserted themselves in the broader prospect. And, for sentimental Marius, all this was associated, by some perhaps fantastic affinity, with a peculiar trait of severity, beyond his guesses as to the secret of it, which mingled with the blitheness of his new companion. Concurring, indeed, with the condition of a Roman soldier, it was certainly something far more than the expression of military hardness, or *ascêsis;* and what was earnest, or even austere, in the landscape they had traversed together, seemed to have been waiting for the passage of this figure to interpret or inform it. Again, as in his early days with Flavian, a vivid personal presence broke through the dreamy idealism, which had almost come to doubt of other men's reality . reassuringly, indeed, yet not without some sense of a constraining tyranny over him from without.

For Cornelius, returning from the campaign, to take up his quarters on the *Palatine*, in the imperial guard, seemed to carry about with him, in that privileged world of comely usage to which he belonged, the atmosphere of some still more jealously exclusive circle. They halted on the morrow at noon, not at an inn, but at the house of one of the young soldier's friends, whom they found absent, indeed, in consequence of the

plague in those parts, so that after a mid-day rest only, they proceeded again on their journey. The great room of the villa, to which they were admitted, had lain long untouched ; and the dust rose, as they entered, into the slanting bars of sunlight, that fell through the half-closed shutters. It was here, to while away the time, that Cornelius bethought himself of displaying to his new friend the various articles and ornaments of his knightly array—the breastplate, the sandals and cuirass, lacing them on, one by one, with the assistance of Marius, and finally the great golden bracelet on the right arm, conferred on him by his general for an act of valour. And as he gleamed there, amid that odd interchange of light and shade, with the staff of a silken standard firm in his hand, Marius felt as if he were face to face, for the first time, with some new knighthood or chivalry, just then coming into the world.

It was soon after they left this place, journeying now by carriage, that Rome was seen at last, with much excitement on the part of our travellers ; Cornelius, and some others of whom the party then consisted, agreeing, chiefly for the sake of Marius, to hasten forward, that it might be reached by daylight, with a cheerful noise of rapid wheels as they passed over the flagstones. But the highest light upon the mausoleum of Hadrian was quite gone out, and it was dark, before they reached the *Flaminian* Gate. The

abundant sound of water was the one thing that impressed Marius, as they passed down a long street, with many open spaces on either hand: Cornelius to his military quarters, and Marius to the old dwelling-place of his fathers.

CHAPTER XI

"THE MOST RELIGIOUS CITY IN THE WORLD"

MARIUS awoke early and passed curiously from room to room, noting for more careful inspection by and by the rolls of manuscripts. Even greater than his curiosity in gazing for the first time on this ancient possession, was his eagerness to look out upon Rome itself, as he pushed back curtain and shutter, and stepped forth in the fresh morning upon one of the many balconies, with an oft-repeated dream realised at last. He was certainly fortunate in the time of his coming to Rome. That old pagan world, of which Rome was the flower, had reached its perfection in the things of poetry and art—a perfection which indicated only too surely the eve of decline. As in some vast intellectual museum, all its manifold products were intact and in their places, and with custodians also still extant, duly qualified to appreciate and explain them. And at no period of history had the material Rome itself been better worth seeing—lying there not less consummate than that world of

pagan intellect which it represented in every phase of its darkness and light. The various work of many ages fell here harmoniously together, as yet untouched save by time, adding the final grace of a rich softness to its complex expression. Much which spoke of ages earlier than Nero, the great re-builder, lingered on, antique, quaint, immeasurably venerable, like the relics of the medieval city in the Paris of Lewis the Fourteenth : the work of Nero's own time had come to have that sort of old world and picturesque interest which the work of Lewis has for ourselves ; while without stretching a parallel too far we might perhaps liken the architectural *finesses* of the archaic Hadrian to the more excellent products of our own Gothic revival. The temple of Antoninus and Faustina was still fresh in all the majesty of its closely arrayed columns of *cipollino ;* but, on the whole, little had been added under the late and present emperors, and during fifty years of public quiet, a sober brown and gray had grown apace on things. The gilding on the roof of many a temple had lost its garishness : cornice and capital of polished marble shone out with all the crisp freshness of real flowers, amid the already mouldering travertine and brickwork, though the birds had built freely among them. What Marius then saw was in many respects, after all deduction of difference, more like the modern Rome than the enumeration of particular losses

might lead us to suppose ; the Renaissance, in its most ambitious mood and with amplest resources, having resumed the ancient classical tradition there, with no break or obstruction, as it had happened, in any very considerable work of the middle age. Immediately before him, on the square, steep height, where the earliest little old Rome had huddled itself together, arose the palace of the Cæsars. Half-veiling the vast substruction of rough, brown stone—line upon line of successive ages of builders—the trim, old-fashioned garden walks, under their closely-woven walls of dark glossy foliage, test of long and careful cultivation, wound gradually, among choice trees, statues and fountains, distinct and sparkling in the full morning sunlight, to the richly tinted mass of pavilions and corridors above, centering in the lofty, white-marble dwelling-place of Apollo himself.

How often had Marius looked forward to that first, free wandering through Rome, to which he now went forth with a heat in the town sunshine (like a mist of fine gold-dust spread through the air) to the height of his desire, making the dun coolness of the narrow streets welcome enough at intervals. He almost feared, descending the stair hastily, lest some unforeseen accident should snatch the little cup of enjoyment from him ere he passed the door. In such morning rambles in places new to him,

life had always seemed to come at its fullest: it was then he could feel his youth, that youth the days of which he had already begun to count jealously, in entire possession. So the grave, pensive figure, a figure, be it said nevertheless, fresher far than often came across it now, moved through the old city towards the lodgings of Cornelius, certainly not by the most direct course, however eager to rejoin the friend of yesterday.

Bent as keenly on seeing as if his first day in Rome were to be also his last, the two friends descended along the *Vicus Tuscus*, with its rows of incense-stalls, into the *Via Nova*, where the fashionable people were busy shopping; and Marius saw with much amusement the frizzled heads, then *à la mode*. A glimpse of the *Marmorata*, the haven at the river-side, where specimens of all the precious marbles of the world were lying amid great white blocks from the quarries of Luna, took his thoughts for a moment to his distant home. They visited the flower-market, lingering where the *coronarii* pressed on them the newest species, and purchased zinias, now in blossom (like painted flowers, thought Marius), to decorate the folds of their togas. Loitering to the other side of the Forum, past the great Galen's drug-shop, after a glance at the announcements of new poems on sale attached to the doorpost of a famous bookseller, they entered the curious

library of the Temple of Peace, then a favourite resort of literary men, and read, fixed there for all to see, the *Diurnal* or Gazette of the day, which announced, together with births and deaths, prodigies and accidents, and much mere matter of business, the date and manner of the philosophic emperor's joyful return to his people; and, thereafter, with eminent names faintly disguised, what would carry that day's news, in many copies, over the provinces—a certain matter concerning the great lady, known to be dear to him, whom he had left at home. It was a story, with the development of which "society" had indeed for some time past edified or amused itself, rallying sufficiently from the panic of a year ago, not only to welcome back its ruler, but also to relish a *chronique scandaleuse;* and thus, when soon after Marius saw the world's wonder, he was already acquainted with the suspicions which have ever since hung about her name. Twelve o'clock was come before they left the Forum, waiting in a little crowd to hear the *Accensus*, according to old custom, proclaim the hour of noonday, at the moment when, from the steps of the Senate-house, the sun could be seen standing between the *Rostra* and the *Græcostasis*. He exerted for this function a strength of voice, which confirmed in Marius a judgment the modern visitor may share with him, that Roman throats and Roman chests, namely, must, in some peculiar way, be differ-

ently constructed from those of other people. Such judgment indeed he had formed in part the evening before, noting, as a religious procession passed him, how much noise a man and a boy could make, though not without a great deal of real music, of which in truth the Romans were then as ever passionately fond.

Hence the two friends took their way through the *Via Flaminia*, almost along the line of the modern *Corso*, already bordered with handsome villas, turning presently to the left, into the *Field-of-Mars*, still the playground of Rome. But the vast public edifices were grown to be almost continuous over the grassy expanse, represented now only by occasional open spaces of verdure and wild-flowers. In one of these a crowd was standing, to watch a party of athletes stripped for exercise. Marius had been surprised at the luxurious variety of the litters borne through Rome, where no carriage horses were allowed; and just then one far more sumptuous than the rest, with dainty appointments of ivory and gold, was carried by, all the town pressing with eagerness to get a glimpse of its most beautiful woman, as she passed rapidly. Yes! there, was the wonder of the world—the empress Faustina herself: Marius could distinguish, could distinguish clearly, the well-known profile, between the floating purple curtains.

For indeed all Rome was ready to burst into gaiety again, as it awaited with much real

affection, hopeful and animated, the return of its emperor, for whose *ovation* various adornments were preparing along the streets through which the imperial procession would pass. He had left Rome just twelve months before, amid immense gloom. The alarm of a barbarian insurrection along the whole line of the Danube had happened at the moment when Rome was panic-stricken by the great pestilence.

In fifty years of peace, broken only by that conflict in the East from which Lucius Verus, among other curiosities, brought back the plague, war had come to seem a merely romantic, superannuated incident of bygone history. And now it was almost upon Italian soil. Terrible were the reports of the numbers and audacity of the assailants. Aurelius, as yet untried in war, and understood by a few only in the whole scope of a really great character, was known to the majority of his subjects as but a careful administrator, though a student of philosophy, perhaps, as we say, a *dilettante*. But he was also the visible centre of government, towards whom the hearts of a whole people turned, grateful for fifty years of public happiness—its good genius, its "Antonine"—whose fragile person might be foreseen speedily giving way under the trials of military life, with a disaster like that of the slaughter of the legions by Arminius. Prophecies of the world's impending conflagration were easily credited: "the secular fire" would descend from

heaven : superstitious fear had even demanded the sacrifice of a human victim.

Marcus Aurelius, always philosophically considerate of the humours of other people, exercising also that devout appreciation of every religious claim which was one of his characteristic habits, had invoked, in aid of the commonwealth, not only all native gods, but all foreign deities as well, however strange. — "Help! Help! in the ocean space!" A multitude of foreign priests had been welcomed to Rome, with their various peculiar religious rites. The sacrifices made on this occasion were remembered for centuries ; and the starving poor, at least, found some satisfaction in the flesh of those herds of "white bulls," which came into the city, day after day, to yield the savour of their blood to the gods.

In spite of all this, the legions had but followed their standards despondently. But prestige, personal prestige, the name of "Emperor," still had its magic power over the nations. The mere approach of the Roman army made an impression on the barbarians. Aurelius and his colleague had scarcely reached Aquileia when a deputation arrived to ask for peace. And now the two imperial "brothers" were returning home at leisure ; were waiting, indeed, at a villa outside the walls, till the capital had made ready to receive them. But although Rome was thus in genial reaction, with much relief,

and hopefulness against the winter, facing itself industriously in damask of red and gold, those two enemies were still unmistakably extant: the barbarian army of the Danube was but over-awed for a season; and the plague, as we saw when Marius was on his way to Rome, was not to depart till it had done a large part in the formation of the melancholy picturesque of modern Italy—till it had made, or prepared for the making of the Roman *Campagna*. The old, unaffected, really pagan, peace or gaiety, of Antoninus Pius—that genuine though unconscious humanist—was gone for ever. And again and again, throughout this day of varied observation, Marius had been reminded, above all else, that he was not merely in "the most religious city of the world," as one had said, but that Rome was become the romantic home of the wildest superstition. Such superstition presented itself almost as religious mania in many an incident of his long ramble,—incidents to which he gave his full attention, though contending in some measure with a reluctance on the part of his companion, the motive of which he did not understand till long afterwards. Marius certainly did not allow this reluctance to deter his own curiosity. Had he not come to Rome partly under poetic vocation, to receive all those things, the very impress of life itself, upon the visual, the imaginative, organ, as upon a mirror; to reflect them; to transmute them

into golden words? He must observe that strange medley of superstition, that centuries' growth, layer upon layer, of the curiosities of religion (one faith jostling another out of place) at least for its picturesque interest, and as an indifferent outsider might, not too deeply concerned in the question which, if any of them, was to be the survivor.

Superficially, at least, the Roman religion, allying itself with much diplomatic economy to possible rivals, was in possession, as a vast and complex system of usage, intertwining itself with every detail of public and private life, attractively enough for those who had but "the historic temper," and a taste for the past, however much a Lucian might depreciate it. Roman religion, as Marius knew, had, indeed, been always something to be done, rather than something to be thought, or believed, or loved; something to be done in minutely detailed manner, at a particular time and place, correctness in which had long been a matter of laborious learning with a whole school of ritualists—as also, now and again, a matter of heroic sacrifice with certain exceptionally devout souls, as when Caius Fabius Dorso, with his life in his hand, succeeded in passing the sentinels of the invading Gauls to perform a sacrifice on the Quirinal, and, thanks to the divine protection, had returned in safety. So jealous was the distinction between sacred and profane, that, in the matter

of the "regarding of days," it had made more than half the year a holiday. Aurelius had, indeed, ordained that there should be no more than a hundred and thirty-five festival days in the year; but in other respects he had followed in the steps of his predecessor, Antoninus Pius —commended especially for his "religion," his conspicuous devotion to its public ceremonies —and whose coins are remarkable for their reference to the oldest and most hieratic types of Roman mythology. Aurelius had succeeded in more than healing the old feud between philosophy and religion, displaying himself, in singular combination, as at once the most zealous of philosophers and the most devout of polytheists, and lending himself, with an air of conviction, to all the pageantries of public worship. To his pious recognition of that one orderly spirit, which, according to the doctrine of the Stoics, diffuses itself through the world, and animates it—a recognition taking the form, with him, of a constant effort towards inward likeness thereto, in the harmonious order of his own soul—he had added a warm personal devotion towards the whole multitude of the old national gods, and a great many new foreign ones besides, by him, at least, not ignobly conceived. If the comparison may be reverently made, there was something here of the method by which the catholic church has added the *cultus* of the saints to its worship of the one Divine Being.

And to the view of the majority, though the emperor, as the personal centre of religion, entertained the hope of converting his people to philosophic faith, and had even pronounced certain public discourses for their instruction in it, that polytheistic devotion was his most striking feature. Philosophers, indeed, had, for the most part, thought with Seneca, "that a man need not lift his hands to heaven, nor ask the sacristan's leave to put his mouth to the ear of an image, that his prayers might be heard the better."—Marcus Aurelius, "a master in Israel," knew all that well enough. Yet his outward devotion was much more than a concession to popular sentiment, or a mere result of that sense of fellow-citizenship with others, which had made him again and again, under most difficult circumstances, an excellent comrade. Those others, too!—amid all their ignorances, what were they but instruments in the administration of the Divine Reason, "from end to end sweetly and strongly disposing all things"? Meantime "Philosophy" itself had assumed much of what we conceive to be the religious character. It had even cultivated the habit, the power, of "spiritual direction"; the troubled soul making recourse in its hour of destitution, or amid the distractions of the world, to this or that director —*philosopho suo*—who could really best understand it.

And it had been in vain that the old, grave

and discreet religion of Rome had set itself, according to its proper genius, to prevent or subdue all trouble and disturbance in men's souls. In religion, as in other matters, plebeians, as such, had a taste for movement, for revolution ; and it had been ever in the most populous quarters that religious changes began. To the apparatus of foreign religion, above all, recourse had been made in times of public disquietude or sudden terror ; and in those great religious celebrations, before his proceeding against the barbarians, Aurelius had even restored the solemnities of Isis, prohibited in the capital since the time of Augustus, making no secret of his worship of that goddess, though her temple had been actually destroyed by authority in the reign of Tiberius. Her singular and in many ways beautiful ritual was now popular in Rome. And then—what the enthusiasm of the swarming plebeian quarters had initiated, was sure to be adopted, sooner or later, by women of fashion. A blending of all the religions of the ancient world had been accomplished. The new gods had arrived, had been welcomed, and found their places ; though, certainly, with no real security, in any adequate ideal of the divine nature itself in the background of men's minds, that the presence of the new-comer should be edifying, or even refining. High and low addressed themselves to all deities alike without scruple ; confusing them together when they prayed, and in the old,

authorised, threefold veneration of their visible images, by flowers, incense, and ceremonial lights —those beautiful usages, which the church, in her way through the world, ever making spoil of the world's goods for the better uses of the human spirit, took up and sanctified in her service.

And certainly "the most religious city in the world" took no care to veil its devotion, however fantastic. The humblest house had its little chapel or shrine, its image and lamp; while almost every one seemed to exercise some religious function and responsibility. Colleges, composed for the most part of slaves and of the poor, provided for the service of the *Compitalian Lares*—the gods who presided, respectively, over the several quarters of the city. In one street, Marius witnessed an incident of the festival of the patron deity of that neighbourhood, the way being strewn with box, the houses tricked out gaily in such poor finery as they possessed, while the ancient idol was borne through it in procession, arrayed in gaudy attire the worse for wear. Numerous religious clubs had their stated anniversaries, on which the members issued with much ceremony from their guild-hall, or *schola*, and traversed the thoroughfares of Rome, preceded, like the confraternities of the present day, by their sacred banners, to offer sacrifice before some famous image. Black with the perpetual smoke of lamps and incense, oftenest old and

ugly, perhaps on that account the more likely to listen to the desires of the suffering—had not those sacred effigies sometimes given sensible tokens that they were aware? The image of the Fortune of Women—*Fortuna Muliebris*, in the Latin Way, had spoken (not once only) and declared; *Bene me, Matronæ! vidistis riteque dedicastis!* The Apollo of Cumæ had wept during three whole nights and days. The images in the temple of Juno Sospita had been seen to sweat. Nay! there was blood—divine blood—in the hearts of some of them: the images in the Grove of Feronia had sweated blood!

From one and all Cornelius had turned away: like the "atheist" of whom Apuleius tells he had never once raised hand to lip in passing image or sanctuary, and had parted from Marius finally when the latter determined to enter the crowded doorway of a temple, on their return into the Forum, below the Palatine hill, where the mothers were pressing in, with a multitude of every sort of children, to touch the lightning-struck image of the wolf-nurse of Romulus—so tender to little ones!—just discernible in its dark shrine, amid a blaze of lights. Marius gazed after his companion of the day, as he mounted the steps to his lodging, singing to himself, as it seemed. Marius failed precisely to catch the words.

And, as the rich, fresh evening came on, there was heard all over Rome, far above a whisper,

the whole town seeming hushed to catch it distinctly, the lively, reckless call to "play," from the sons and daughters of foolishness, to those in whom their life was still green—*Donec virenti canities abest !—Donec virenti canities abest !* Marius could hardly doubt how Cornelius would have taken the call. And as for himself, slight as was the burden of positive moral obligation with which he had entered Rome, it was to no wasteful and vagrant affections, such as these, that his Epicureanism had committed him.

CHAPTER XII

THE DIVINITY THAT DOTH HEDGE A KING

> But ah! Mæcenas is yclad in claye,
> And great Augustus long ygoe is dead,
> And all the worthies liggen wrapt in lead,
> That matter made for poets on to playe.

Marcus Aurelius who, though he had little relish for them himself, had ever been willing to humour the taste of his people for magnificent spectacles, was received back to Rome with the lesser honours of the *Ovation*, conceded by the Senate (so great was the public sense of deliverance) with even more than the laxity which had become its habit under imperial rule, for there had been no actual bloodshed in the late achievement. Clad in the civic dress of the chief Roman magistrate, and with a crown of myrtle upon his head, his colleague similarly attired walking beside him, he passed up to the Capitol on foot, though in solemn procession along the Sacred Way, to offer sacrifice to the national gods. The victim, a goodly sheep, whose image we may still see between the pig and the ox of the

Suovetaurilia, filleted and stoled almost like some ancient canon of the church, on a sculptured fragment in the Forum, was conducted by the priests, clad in rich white vestments, and bearing their sacred utensils of massive gold, immediately behind a company of flute-players, led by the great choir-master, or *conductor*, of the day, visibly tetchy or delighted, according as the instruments he ruled with his tuning-rod, rose, more or less adequately amid the difficulties of the way, to the dream of perfect music in the soul within him. The vast crowd, including the soldiers of the triumphant army, now restored to wives and children, all alike in holiday whiteness, had left their houses early in the fine, dry morning, in a real affection for "the father of his country," to await the procession, the two princes having spent the preceding night outside the walls, at the old *Villa of the Republic*. Marius, full of curiosity, had taken his position with much care; and stood to see the world's masters pass by, at an angle from which he could command the view of a great part of the processional route, sprinkled with fine yellow sand, and punctiliously guarded from profane footsteps.

The coming of the pageant was announced by the clear sound of the flutes, heard at length above the acclamations of the people—*Salve Imperator!—Dii te servent!*—shouted in regular time, over the hills. It was on the central

figure, of course, that the whole attention of Marius was fixed from the moment when the procession came in sight, preceded by the lictors with gilded *fasces*, the imperial image-bearers, and the pages carrying lighted torches; a band of knights, among whom was Cornelius in complete military array, following. Amply swathed about in the folds of a richly worked toga, after a manner now long since become obsolete with meaner persons, Marius beheld a man of about five-and-forty years of age, with prominent eyes — eyes, which although demurely downcast during this essentially religious ceremony, were by nature broadly and benignantly observant. He was still, in the main, as we see him in the busts which represent his gracious and courtly youth, when Hadrian had playfully called him, not *Verus*, after the name of his father, but *Verissimus*, for his candour of gaze, and the bland capacity of the brow, which, below the brown hair, clustering thickly as of old, shone out low, broad, and clear, and still without a trace of the trouble of his lips. You saw the brow of one who, amid the blindness or perplexity of the people about him, understood all things clearly; the dilemma, to which his experience so far had brought him, between Chance with meek resignation, and a Providence with boundless possibilities and hope, being for him at least distinctly defined.

That outward serenity, which he valued so

highly as a point of manner or expression not unworthy the care of a public minister—outward symbol, it might be thought, of the inward religious serenity it had been his constant purpose to maintain—was increased to-day by his sense of the gratitude of his people ; that his life had been one of such gifts and blessings as made his person seem in very deed divine to them. Yet the cloud of some reserved internal sorrow, passing from time to time into an expression of fatigue and effort, of loneliness amid the shouting multitude, might have been detected there by the more observant—as if the sagacious hint of one of his officers, " The soldiers can't understand you, they don't know Greek," were applicable always to his relationships with other people. The nostrils and mouth seemed capable almost of peevishness ; and Marius noted in them, as in the hands, and in the spare body generally, what was new to his experience—something of asceticism, as we say, of a bodily gymnastic, by which, although it told pleasantly in the clear blue humours of the eye, the flesh had scarcely been an equal gainer with the spirit. It was hardly the expression of " the healthy mind in the healthy body," but rather of a sacrifice of the body to the soul, its needs and aspirations, that Marius seemed to divine in this assiduous student of the Greek sages—a sacrifice, in truth, far beyond the demands of their very saddest philosophy of life.

Dignify thyself with modesty and simplicity for thine ornaments!—had been ever a maxim with this dainty and high-bred Stoic, who still thought *manners* a true part of *morals*, according to the old sense of the term, and who regrets now and again that he cannot control his thoughts equally well with his countenance. That outward composure was deepened during the solemnities of this day by an air of pontifical abstraction; which, though very far from being pride—nay, a sort of humility rather—yet gave, to himself, an air of unapproachableness, and to his whole proceeding, in which every minutest act was considered, the character of a ritual. Certainly, there was no haughtiness, social, moral, or even philosophic, in Aurelius, who had realised, under more trying conditions perhaps than any one before, that no element of humanity could be alien from him. Yet, as he walked to-day, the centre of ten thousand observers, with eyes discreetly fixed on the ground, veiling his head at times and muttering very rapidly the words of the "supplications," there was something many spectators may have noted as a thing new in their experience, for Aurelius, unlike his predecessors, took all this with absolute seriousness. The doctrine of the sanctity of kings, that, in the words of Tacitus, Princes are as Gods—*Principes instar deorum esse*—seemed to have taken a novel, because a literal, sense. For Aurelius, indeed, the old legend of his descent from Numa, from

Numa who had talked with the gods, meant much. Attached in very early years to the service of the altars, like many another noble youth, he was "observed to perform all his sacerdotal functions with a constancy and exactness unusual at that age; was soon a master of the sacred music; and had all the forms and ceremonies by heart." And now, as the emperor, who had not only a vague divinity about his person, but was actually the chief religious functionary of the state, recited from time to time the forms of invocation, he needed not the help of the prompter, or *ceremoniarius*, who then approached, to assist him by whispering the appointed words in his ear. It was that pontifical abstraction which then impressed itself on Marius as the leading outward characteristic of Aurelius, though to him alone, perhaps, in that vast crowd of observers, it was no strange thing, but a matter he had understood from of old.

Some fanciful writers have assigned the origin of these triumphal processions to the mythic pomps of Dionysus, after his conquests in the East; the very word *Triumph* being, according to this supposition, only *Thriambos*—the Dionysiac Hymn. And certainly the younger of the two imperial "brothers," who, with the effect of a strong contrast, walked beside Aurelius, and shared the honours of the day, might well have reminded people of the delicate Greek god of flowers and wine. This

new conqueror of the East was now about thirty-six years old, but with his scrupulous care for all the advantages of his person, and a soft curling beard powdered with gold, looked many years younger. One result of the more genial element in the wisdom of Aurelius had been that, amid most difficult circumstances, he had known throughout life how to act in union with persons of character very alien from his own ; to be more than loyal to the colleague, the younger brother in empire, he had too lightly taken to himself, five years before, then an uncorrupt youth, "skilled in manly exercises and fitted for war." When Aurelius thanks the gods that a brother had fallen to his lot, whose character was a stimulus to the proper care of his own, one sees that this could only have happened in the way of an example, putting him on his guard against insidious faults. But it is with sincere amiability that the imperial writer, who was indeed little used to be ironical, adds that the lively respect and affection of the junior had often "gladdened" him. To be able to make his use of the flower, when the fruit perhaps was useless or poisonous : —that was one of the practical successes of his philosophy ; and his people noted, with a blessing, "the concord of the two Augusti."

The younger, certainly, possessed in full measure that charm of a constitutional freshness of aspect which may defy for a long time extravagant or erring habits of life ; a physiognomy,

healthy-looking, cleanly, and firm, which seemed unassociable with any form of self-torment, and made one think of the muzzle of some young hound or roe, such as human beings invariably like to stroke—a physiognomy, in effect, with all the goodliness of animalism of the finer sort, though still wholly animal. The charm was that of the blond head, the unshrinking gaze, the warm tints : neither more nor less than one may see every English summer, in youth, manly enough, and with the stuff which makes brave soldiérs, in spite of the natural kinship it seems to have with playthings and gay flowers. But innate in Lucius Verus there was that more than womanly fondness for fond things, which had made the atmosphere of the old city of Antioch, heavy with centuries of voluptuousness, a poison to him : he had come to love his delicacies best out of season, and would have gilded the very flowers. But with a wonderful power of self-obliteration, the elder brother at the capital had directed his procedure successfully, and allowed him, become now also the husband of his daughter Lucilla, the credit of a "Conquest," though Verus had certainly not returned a conqueror over himself. He had returned, as we know, with the plague in his company, along with many another strange creature of his folly ; and when the people saw him publicly feeding his favourite horse *Fleet* with almonds and sweet grapes, wearing the animal's image in gold, and

finally building it a tomb, they felt, with some un-sentimental misgiving, that he might revive the manners of Nero.—What if, in the chances of war, he should survive the protecting genius of that elder brother?

He was all himself to-day: and it was with much wistful curiosity that Marius regarded him. For Lucius Verus was, indeed, but the highly expressive type of a class,—the true son of his father, adopted by Hadrian. Lucius Verus the elder, also, had had the like strange capacity for misusing the adornments of life, with a masterly grace; as if such misusing were, in truth, the quite adequate occupation of an intelligence, powerful, but distorted by cynical philosophy or some disappointment of the heart. It was almost a sort of genius, of which there had been instances in the imperial purple: it was to ascend the throne, a few years later, in the person of one, now a hopeful little lad at home in the palace; and it had its following, of course, among the wealthy youth at Rome, who concentrated no inconsiderable force of shrewdness and tact upon minute details of attire and manner, as upon the one thing needful. Certainly, flowers were pleasant to the eye. Such things had even their sober use, as making the outside of human life superficially attractive, and thereby promoting the first steps towards friendship and social amity. But what precise place could there be for Verus and his peculiar charm,

in that *Wisdom*, that Order of divine Reason "reaching from end to end, strongly and sweetly disposing all things," from the vision of which Aurelius came down, so tolerant of persons like him? Into such vision Marius too was certainly well-fitted to enter, yet, noting the actual perfection of Lucius Verus after his kind, his undeniable achievement of the select, in all minor things, felt, though with some suspicion of himself, that he entered into, and could understand, this other so dubious sort of character also. There was a voice in the theory he had brought to Rome with him which whispered "nothing is either great nor small;" as there were times when he could have thought that, as the "grammarian's" or the artist's ardour of soul may be satisfied by the perfecting of the theory of a sentence, or the adjustment of two colours, so his own life also might have been fulfilled by an enthusiastic quest after perfection; —say, in the flowering and folding of a toga.

The emperors had burned incense before the image of Jupiter, arrayed in its most gorgeous apparel, amid sudden shouts from the people of *Salve Imperator!* turned now from the living princes to the deity, as they discerned his countenance through the great open doors. The imperial brothers had deposited their crowns of myrtle on the richly embroidered lapcloth of the god; and, with their chosen guests, sat down to a public feast in the temple

itself. There followed what was, after all, the great event of the day:—an appropriate discourse, a discourse almost wholly *de contemptu mundi*, delivered in the presence of the assembled Senate, by the emperor Aurelius, who had thus, on certain rare occasions, condescended to instruct his people, with the double authority of a chief pontiff and a laborious student of philosophy. In those lesser honours of the *ovation*, there had been no attendant slave behind the emperors, to make mock of their effulgence as they went; and it was as if with the discretion proper to a philosopher, and in fear of a jealous Nemesis, he had determined himself to protest in time against the vanity of all outward success.

The Senate was assembled to hear the emperor's discourse in the vast hall of the *Curia Julia*. A crowd of high-bred youths idled around, or on the steps before the doors, with the marvellous toilets Marius had noticed in the *Via Nova*; in attendance, as usual, to learn by observation the minute points of senatorial procedure. Marius had already some acquaintance with them, and passing on found himself suddenly in the presence of what was still the most august assembly the world had seen. Under Aurelius, ever full of veneration for this ancient traditional guardian of public religion, the Senate had recovered all its old dignity and independence. Among its members many

hundreds in number, visibly the most distinguished of them all, Marius noted the great sophists or rhetoricians of the day, in all their magnificence. The antique character of their attire, and the ancient mode of wearing it, still surviving with them, added to the imposing character of their persons, while they sat, with their staves of ivory in their hands, on their curule chairs—almost the exact pattern of the chair still in use in the Roman church when a Bishop *pontificates* at the divine offices—"tranquil and unmoved, with a majesty that seemed divine," as Marius thought, like the old Gaul of the Invasion. The rays of the early November sunset slanted full upon the audience, and made it necessary for the officers of the Court to draw the purple curtains over the windows, adding to the solemnity of the scene. In the depth of those warm shadows, surrounded by her ladies, the empress Faustina was seated to listen. The beautiful Greek statue of Victory, which since the days of Augustus had presided over the assemblies of the Senate, had been brought into the hall, and placed near the chair of the emperor; who, after rising to perform a brief sacrificial service in its honour, bowing reverently to the assembled fathers left and right, took his seat and began to speak.

'There was a certain melancholy grandeur in the very simplicity or triteness of the theme: as it were the very quintessence of all the old

Roman epitaphs, of all that was monumental in that city of tombs, layer upon layer of dead things and people. As if in the very fervour of disillusion, he seemed to be composing—*ὥσπερ ἐπιγραφὰς χρόνων καὶ ὅλων ἐθνων*—the sepulchral titles of ages and whole peoples; nay! the very epitaph of the living Rome itself. The grandeur of the ruins of Rome,—heroism in ruin: it was under the influence of an imaginative anticipation of this, that he appeared to be speaking. And though the impression of the actual greatness of Rome on that day was but enhanced by the strain of contempt, falling with an accent of pathetic conviction from the emperor himself, and gaining from his pontifical pretensions the authority of a religious intimation, yet the curious interest of the discourse lay in this, that Marius, for one, as he listened, seemed to forsee a grass-grown Forum, the broken ways of the Capitol, and the Palatine hill itself in humble occupation. That impression connected itself with what he had already noted of an actual change even then coming over Italian scenery. Throughout, he could trace something of a humour into which Stoicism at all times tends to fall, the tendency to cry, *Abase yourselves!* There was here the almost inhuman impassibility of one who had thought too closely on the paradoxical aspect of the love of posthumous fame. With the ascetic pride which lurks under all Platonism,

resultant from its opposition of the seen to the unseen, as falsehood to truth—the imperial Stoic, like his true descendant, the hermit of the middle age, was ready, in no friendly humour, to mock, there in its narrow bed, the corpse which had made so much of itself in life. Marius could but contrast all that with his own Cyrenaic eagerness, just then, to taste and see and touch; reflecting on the opposite issues deducible from the same text. "The world, within me and without, flows away like a river," he had said; "therefore let me make the most of what is here and now."—"The world and the thinker upon it, are consumed like a flame," said Aurelius, "therefore will I turn away my eyes from vanity: renounce: withdraw myself alike from all affections." He seemed tacitly to claim as a sort of personal dignity, that he was very familiarly versed in this view of things, and could discern a death's-head everywhere. Now and again Marius was reminded of the saying that "with the Stoics all people are the vulgar save themselves;" and at times the orator seemed to have forgotten his audience, and to be speaking only to himself.

"Art thou in love with men's praises, get thee into the very soul of them, and see!—see what judges they be, even in those matters which concern themselves. Wouldst thou have their praise after death, bethink thee, that they who shall come hereafter, and with whom thou

wouldst survive by thy great name, will be but as these, whom here thou hast found so hard to live with. For of a truth, the soul of him who is aflutter upon renown after death, presents not this aright to itself, that of all whose memory he would have each one will likewise very quickly depart, until memory herself be put out, as she journeys on by means of such as are themselves on the wing but for a while, and are extinguished in their turn.—Making so much of those thou wilt never see! It is as if thou wouldst have had those who were before thee discourse fair things concerning thee.

"To him, indeed, whose wit hath been whetted by true doctrine, that well-worn sentence of Homer sufficeth, to guard him against regret and fear.—

> Like the race of leaves
> The race of man is:—
> The wind in autumn strows
> The earth with old leaves: then the spring the woods with new endows.

Leaves! little leaves!—thy children, thy flatterers, thine enemies! Leaves in the wind, those who would devote thee to darkness, who scorn or miscall thee here, even as they also whose great fame shall outlast them. For all these, and the like of them, are born indeed in the spring season—ἔαρος ἐπιγίγνεται ὥρη: and soon a wind hath scattered them, and thereafter the

wood peopleth itself again with another generation of leaves. And what is common to all of them is but the littleness of their lives: and yet wouldst thou love and hate, as if these things should continue for ever. In a little while thine eyes also will be closed, and he on whom thou perchance hast leaned thyself be himself a burden upon another.

"Bethink thee often of the swiftness with which the things that are, or are even now coming to be, are swept past thee: that the very substance of them is but the perpetual motion of water: that there is almost nothing which continueth: of that bottomless depth of time, so close at thy side. Folly! to be lifted up, or sorrowful, or anxious, by reason of things like these! Think of infinite matter, and thy portion—how tiny a particle, of it! of infinite time, and thine own brief point there; of destiny, and the jot thou art in it; and yield thyself readily to the wheel of Clotho, to spin of thee what web she will.

"As one casting a ball from his hand, the nature of things hath had its aim with every man, not as to the ending only, but the first beginning of his course, and passage thither. And hath the ball any profit of its rising, or loss as it descendeth again, or in its fall? or the bubble, as it groweth or breaketh on the air? or the flame of the lamp, from the beginning to the end of its brief story?

"All but at this present that future is, in which nature, who disposeth all things in order, will transform whatsoever thou now seest, fashioning from its substance somewhat else, and therefrom somewhat else in its turn, lest the world grow old. We are such stuff as dreams are made of—disturbing dreams. Awake, then! and see thy dream as it is, in comparison with that erewhile it seemed to thee.

"And for me, especially, it were well to mind those many mutations of empire in time past; therein peeping also upon the future, which must needs be of like species with what hath been, continuing ever within the rhythm and number of things which really are; so that in forty years one may note of man and of his ways little less than in a thousand. Ah! from this higher place, look we down upon the shipwrecks and the calm! Consider, for example, how the world went, under the emperor Vespasian. They are married and given in marriage, they breed children; love hath its way with them; they heap up riches for others or for themselves; they are murmuring at things as then they are; they are seeking for great place; crafty, flattering, suspicious, waiting upon the death of others:—festivals, business, war, sickness, dissolution: and now their whole life is no longer anywhere at all. Pass on to the reign of Trajan: all things continue the same: and that life also is no longer anywhere at all.

Ah! but look again, and consider, one after another, as it were the sepulchral inscriptions of all peoples and times, according to one pattern.—What multitudes, after their utmost striving—a little afterwards! were dissolved again into their dust.

"Think again of life as it was far off in the ancient world; as it must be when we shall be gone; as it is now among the wild heathen. How many have never heard your names and mine, or will soon forget them! How soon may those who shout my name to-day begin to revile it, because glory, and the memory of men, and all things beside, are but vanity—a sand-heap under the senseless wind, the barking of dogs, the quarrelling of children, weeping incontinently upon their laughter.

"This hasteth to be; that other to have been: of that which now cometh to be, even now somewhat hath been extinguished. And wilt thou make thy treasure of any one of these things? It were as if one set his love upon the swallow, as it passeth out of sight through the air!

"Bethink thee often, in all contentions public and private, of those whom men have remembered by reason of their anger and vehement spirit—those famous rages, and the occasions of them—the great fortunes, and misfortunes, of men's strife of old. What are they all now, and the dust of their battles? Dust

and ashes indeed; a fable, a mythus, or not so much as that. Yes! keep those before thine eyes who took this or that, the like of which happeneth to thee, so hardly; were so querulous, so agitated. And where again are they? Wouldst thou have it not otherwise with thee?

Consider how quickly all things vanish away —their bodily structure into the general substance; the very memory of them into that great gulf and abysm of past thoughts. Ah! 'tis on a tiny space of earth thou art creeping through life—a pigmy soul carrying a dead body to its grave.

"Let death put thee upon the consideration both of thy body and thy soul: what an atom of all matter hath been distributed to thee; what a little particle of the universal mind. Turn thy body about, and consider what thing it is, and that which old age, and lust, and the languor of disease can make of it. Or come to its substantial and causal qualities, its very type: contemplate that in itself, apart from the accidents of matter, and then measure also the span of time for which the nature of things, at the longest, will maintain that special type. Nay! in the very principles and first constituents of things corruption hath its part—so much dust, humour, stench, and scraps of bone! Consider that thy marbles are but the earth's callosities, thy gold and silver its *fæces;* this silken robe but a worm's bedding, and thy

purple an unclean fish. Ah! and thy life's breath is not otherwise, as it passeth out of matters like these, into the like of them again.

"For the one soul in things, taking matter like wax in the hands, moulds and remoulds—how hastily!—beast, and plant, and the babe, in turn: and that which dieth hath not slipped out of the order of nature, but, remaining therein, hath also its changes there, disparting into those elements of which nature herself, and thou too, art compacted. She changes without murmuring. The oaken chest falls to pieces with no more complaining than when the carpenter fitted it together. If one told thee certainly that on the morrow thou shouldst die, or at the furthest on the day after, it would be no great matter to thee to die on the day after to-morrow, rather than to-morrow. Strive to think it a thing no greater that thou wilt die—not to-morrow, but a year, or two years, or ten years from to-day.

"I find that all things are now as they were in the days of our buried ancestors—all things sordid in their elements, trite by long usage, and yet ephemeral. How ridiculous, then, how like a countryman in town, is he, who wonders at aught. Doth the sameness, the repetition of the public shows, weary thee? Even so doth that likeness of events in the spectacle of the world. And so must it be with thee to the end. For the wheel of the world hath ever the same

motion, upward and downward, from generation to generation. When, when, shall time give place to eternity?

"If there be things which trouble thee thou canst put them away, inasmuch as they have their being but in thine own notion concerning them. Consider what death is, and how, if one does but detach from it the appearances, the notions, that hang about it, resting the eye upon it as in itself it really is, it must be thought of but as an effect of nature, and that man but a child whom an effect of nature shall affright. Nay! not function and effect of nature, only; but a thing profitable also to herself.

"To cease from action—the ending of thine effort to think and do: there is no evil in that. Turn thy thought to the ages of man's life, boyhood, youth, maturity, old age: the change in every one of these also is a dying, but evil nowhere. Thou climbedst into the ship, thou hast made thy voyage and touched the shore: go forth now! Be it into some other life: the divine breath is everywhere, even there. Be it into forgetfulness for ever; at least thou wilt rest from the beating of sensible images upon thee, from the passions which pluck thee this way and that like an unfeeling toy, from those long marches of the intellect, from thy toilsome ministry to the flesh.

"Art thou yet more than dust and ashes and bare bone—a name only, or not so much as

that, which, also, is but whispering and a resonance, kept alive from mouth to mouth of dying abjects who have hardly known themselves ; how much less thee, dead so long ago !

"When thou lookest upon a wise man, a lawyer, a captain of war, think upon another gone. When thou seest thine own face in the glass, call up there before thee one of thine ancestors—one of those old Cæsars. Lo ! everywhere, thy double before thee ! Thereon, let the thought occur to thee : And where are they ? anywhere at all, for ever ? And thou, thyself—how long ? Art thou blind to that thou art—thy matter, how temporal ; and thy function, the nature of thy business ? Yet tarry, at least, till thou hast assimilated even these things to thine own proper essence, as a quick fire turneth into heat and light whatsoever be cast upon it.

"As words once in use are antiquated to us, so is it with the names that were once on all men's lips : Camillus, Volesus, Leonnatus : then, in a little while, Scipio and Cato, and then Augustus, and then Hadrian, and then Antoninus Pius. How many great physicians who lifted wise brows at other men's sick-beds, have sickened and died ! Those wise Chaldeans, who foretold, as a great matter, another man's last hour, have themselves been taken by surprise. Ay ! and all those others, in their pleasant places : those who doated on a Capreæ like

Tiberius, on their gardens, on the baths: Pythagoras and Socrates, who reasoned so closely upon immortality: Alexander, who used the lives of others as though his own should last for ever—he and his mule-driver alike now!—one upon another. Well-nigh the whole court of Antoninus is extinct. Panthea and Pergamus sit no longer beside the sepulchre of their lord. The watchers over Hadrian's dust have slipped from his sepulchre.—It were jesting to stay longer. Did they sit there still, would the dead feel it? or feeling it, be glad? or glad, hold those watchers for ever? The time must come when they too shall be aged men and aged women, and decease, and fail from their places; and what shift were there then for imperial service? This too is but the breath of the tomb, and a skinful of dead men's blood.

"Think again of those inscriptions, which belong not to one soul only, but to whole families: Ἔσχατος τοῦ ἰδίου γένους: *He was the last of his race.* Nay! of the burial of whole cities: Helice, Pompeii: of others, whose very burial place is unknown.

"Thou hast been a citizen in this wide city. Count not for how long, nor repine; since that which sends thee hence is no unrighteous judge, no tyrant, but Nature, who brought thee hither; as when a player leaves the stage at the bidding of the conductor who hired him. Sayest thou, 'I have not played five acts'? True! but in

human life, three acts only make sometimes an entire play. That is the composer's business, not thine. Withdraw thyself with a good will; for that too hath, perchance, a good will which dismisseth thee from thy part."

The discourse ended almost in darkness, the evening having set in somewhat suddenly, with a heavy fall of snow. The torches, made ready to do him a useless honour, were of real service now, as the emperor was solemnly conducted home; one man rapidly catching light from another—a long stream of moving lights across the white Forum, up the great stairs, to the palace. And, in effect, that night winter began, the hardest that had been known for a lifetime. The wolves came from the mountains; and, led by the carrion scent, devoured the dead bodies which had been hastily buried during the plague, and, emboldened by their meal, crept, before the short day was well past, over the walls of the farmyards of the *Campagna*. The eagles were seen driving the flocks of smaller birds across the dusky sky. Only, in the city itself the winter was all the brighter for the contrast, among those who could pay for light and warmth. The habit-makers made a great sale of the spoil of all such furry creatures as had escaped wolves and eagles, for presents at the *Saturnalia;* and at no time had the winter roses from Carthage seemed more lustrously yellow and red.

CHAPTER XIII

THE "MISTRESS AND MOTHER" OF PALACES

After that sharp, brief winter, the sun was already at work, softening leaf and bud, as you might feel by a faint sweetness in the air; but he did his work behind an evenly white sky, against which the abode of the Cæsars, its cypresses and bronze roofs, seemed like a picture in beautiful but melancholy colour, as Marius climbed the long flights of steps to be introduced to the emperor Aurelius. Attired in the newest mode, his legs wound in dainty *fasciæ* of white leather, with the heavy gold ring of the *ingenuus*, and in his toga of ceremony, he still retained all his country freshness of complexion. The eyes of the "golden youth" of Rome were upon him as the chosen friend of Cornelius, and the destined servant of the emperor; but not jealously. In spite of, perhaps partly because of, his habitual reserve of manner, he had become "the fashion," even among those who felt instinctively the irony which lay beneath that remarkable self-possession, as of one taking all things with a

difference from other people, perceptible in voice, in expression, and even in his dress. It was, in truth, the air of one who, entering vividly into life, and relishing to the full the delicacies of its intercourse, yet feels all the while, from the point of view of an ideal philosophy, that he is but conceding reality to suppositions, choosing of his own will to walk in a day-dream, of the illusiveness of which he at least is aware.

In the house of the chief chamberlain Marius waited for the due moment of admission to the emperor's presence. He was admiring the peculiar decoration of the walls, coloured like rich old red leather. In the midst of one of them was depicted, under a trellis of fruit you might have gathered, the figure of a woman knocking at a door with wonderful reality of perspective. Then the summons came; and in a few minutes, the etiquette of the imperial household being still a simple matter, he had passed the curtains which divided the central hall of the palace into three parts—three degrees of approach to the sacred person—and was speaking to Aurelius himself; not in Greek, in which the emperor oftenest conversed with the learned, but, more familiarly, in Latin, adorned however, or disfigured, by many a Greek phrase, as now and again French phrases have made the adornment of fashionable English. It was with real kindliness that Marcus Aurelius looked upon Marius, as

a youth of great attainments in Greek letters and philosophy ; and he liked also his serious expression, being, as we know, a believer in the doctrine of physiognomy—that, as he puts it, not love only, but every other affection of man's soul, looks out very plainly from the window of the eyes.

The apartment in which Marius found himself was of ancient aspect, and richly decorated with the favourite toys of two or three generations of imperial collectors, now finally revised by the high connoisseurship of the Stoic emperor himself, though destined not much longer to remain together there. It is the repeated boast of Aurelius that he had learned from old Antoninus Pius to maintain authority without the constant use of guards, in a robe woven by the handmaids of his own consort, with no processional lights or images, and "that a prince may shrink himself almost into the figure of a private gentleman." And yet, again as at his first sight of him, Marius was struck by the profound religiousness of the surroundings of the imperial presence. The effect might have been due in part to the very simplicity, the discreet and scrupulous simplicity, of the central figure in this splendid abode ; but Marius could not forget that he saw before him not only the head of the Roman religion, but one who might actually have claimed something like divine worship, had he cared to do so. Though the fantastic pretensions of Caligula had brought some contempt

on that claim, which had become almost a jest under the ungainly Claudius, yet, from Augustus downwards, a vague divinity had seemed to surround the Cæsars even in this life; and the peculiar character of Aurelius, at once a ceremonious polytheist never forgetful of his pontifical calling, and a philosopher whose mystic speculation encircled him with a sort of saintly halo, had restored to his person, without his intending it, something of that divine prerogative, or prestige. Though he would never allow the immediate dedication of altars to himself, yet the image of his *Genius*—his spirituality or celestial counterpart—was placed among those of the deified princes of the past; and his family, including Faustina and the young Commodus, was spoken of as the "holy" or "divine" house. Many a Roman courtier agreed with the barbarian chief, who, after contemplating a predecessor of Aurelius, withdrew from his presence with the exclamation:—"I have seen a god to-day!" The very roof of his house, rising into a pediment or gable, like that of the sanctuary of a god, the laurels on either side its doorway, the chaplet of oak-leaves above, seemed to designate the place for religious veneration. And notwithstanding all this, the household of Aurelius was singularly modest, with none of the wasteful expense of palaces after the fashion of Lewis the Fourteenth; the palatial dignity being felt only in a peculiar sense of order, the absence

of all that was casual, of vulgarity and discomfort. A merely official residence of his predecessors, the *Palatine* had become the favourite dwelling-place of Aurelius; its many-coloured memories suiting, perhaps, his pensive character, and the crude splendours of Nero and Hadrian being now subdued by time. The window-less Roman abode must have had much of what to a modern would be gloom. How did the children, one wonders, endure houses with so little escape for the eye into the world outside? Aurelius, who had altered little else, choosing to *live* there, in a genuine homeliness, had shifted and made the most of the level lights, and broken out a quite medieval window here and there, and the clear daylight, fully appreciated by his youthful visitor, made pleasant shadows among the objects of the imperial collection. Some of these, indeed, by reason of their Greek simplicity and grace, themselves shone out like spaces of a purer, early light, amid the splendours of the Roman manufacture.

Though he looked, thought Marius, like a man who did not sleep enough, he was abounding and bright to-day, after one of those pitiless headaches, which since boyhood had been the "thorn in his side," challenging the pretensions of his philosophy to fortify one in humble endurances. At the first moment, to Marius, remembering the spectacle of the emperor in ceremony, it was almost bewildering to be in

private conversation with him. There was much in the philosophy of Aurelius—much consideration of mankind at large, of great bodies, aggregates and generalities, after the Stoic manner—which, on a nature less rich than his, might have acted as an inducement to care for people in inverse proportion to their nearness to him. That has sometimes been the result of the Stoic cosmopolitanism. Aurelius, however, determined to beautify by all means, great or little, a doctrine which had in it some potential sourness, had brought all the quickness of his intelligence, and long years of observation, to bear on the conditions of social intercourse. He had early determined "not to make business an excuse to decline the offices of humanity—not to pretend to be too much occupied with important affairs to concede what life with others may hourly demand;" and with such success, that, in an age which made much of the finer points of that intercourse, it was felt that the mere honesty of his conversation was more pleasing than other men's flattery. His agreeableness to his young visitor to-day was, in truth, a blossom of the same wisdom which had made of Lucius Verus really a brother—the wisdom of not being exigent with men, any more than with fruit-trees (it is his own favourite figure) beyond their nature. And there was another person, still nearer to him, regarding whom this wisdom became a marvel, of equity—of charity.

The centre of a group of princely children, in the same apartment with Aurelius, amid all the refined intimacies of a modern home, sat the empress Faustina, warming her hands over a fire. With her long fingers lighted up red by the glowing coals of the brazier Marius looked close upon the most beautiful woman in the world, who was also the great paradox of the age, among her boys and girls. As has been truly said of the numerous representations of her in art, so in life, she had the air of one curious, restless, to enter into conversation with the first comer. She had certainly the power of stimulating a very ambiguous sort of curiosity about herself. And Marius found this enigmatic point in her expression, that even after seeing her many times he could never precisely recall her features in absence. The lad of six years, looking older, who stood beside her, impatiently plucking a rose to pieces over the hearth, was, in outward appearance, his father—the young *Verissimus*—over again ; but with a certain feminine length of feature, and with all his mother's alertness, or license, of gaze.

Yet rumour knocked at every door and window of the imperial house regarding the adulterers who knocked at them, or quietly left their lovers' garlands there. Was not that likeness of the husband, in the boy beside her, really the effect of a shameful magic, in which the blood of the murdered gladiator, his true father, had been an ingredient? Were the tricks for

deceiving husbands which the Roman poet describes, really hers, and her household an efficient school of all the arts of furtive love? Or, was the husband too aware, like every one beside? Were certain sudden deaths which happened there, really the work of apoplexy, or the plague?

The man whose ears, whose soul, those rumours were meant to penetrate, was, however, faithful to his sanguine and optimist philosophy, to his determination that the world should be to him simply what the higher reason preferred to conceive it; and the life's journey Aurelius had made so far, though involving much moral and intellectual loneliness, had been ever in affectionate and helpful contact with other wayfarers, very unlike himself. Since his days of earliest childhood in the Lateran gardens, he seemed to himself, blessing the gods for it after deliberate survey, to have been always surrounded by kinsmen, friends, servants, of exceptional virtue. From the great Stoic idea, that we are all fellow-citizens of one city, he had derived a tenderer, a more equitable estimate than was common among Stoics, of the eternal shortcomings of men and women. Considerations that might tend to the sweetening of his temper it was his daily care to store away, with a kind of philosophic pride in the thought that no one took more good-naturedly than he the "oversights" of his neighbours. For had not Plato taught (it was not

paradox, but simple truth of experience) that if people sin, it is because they know no better, and are "under the necessity of their own ignorance"? Hard to himself, he seemed at times, doubtless, to decline too softly upon unworthy persons. Actually, he came thereby upon many a useful instrument. The empress Faustina he would seem at least to have kept, by a constraining affection, from becoming altogether what most people have believed her, and won in her (we must take him at his word in the "Thoughts," abundantly confirmed by letters, on both sides, in his correspondence with Cornelius Fronto) a consolation, the more secure, perhaps, because misknown of others. Was the secret of her actual blamelessness, after all, with him who has at least screened her name? At all events, the one thing quite certain about her, besides her extraordinary beauty, is her sweetness to himself.

No! The wise, who had made due observation on the trees of the garden, would not expect to gather grapes of thorns or fig-trees: and he was the vine, putting forth his genial fruit, by natural law, again and again, after his kind, whatever use people might make of it. Certainly, his actual presence never lost its power, and Faustina was glad in it to-day, the birthday of one of her children, a boy who stood at her knee holding in his fingers tenderly a tiny silver trumpet, one of his birthday gifts.—"For my

part, unless I conceive my hurt to be such, I have no hurt at all,"—boasts the would-be apathetic emperor :—"and how I care to conceive of the thing rests with me." Yet when his children fall sick or die, this pretence breaks down, and he is broken-hearted : and one of the charms of certain of his letters still extant, is his reference to those childish sicknesses.—"On my return to Lorium," he writes, "I found my little lady—*domnulam meam*—in a fever ;" and again, in a letter to one of the most serious of men, "You will be glad to hear that our little one is better, and running about the room—*parvolam nostram melius valere et intra cubiculum discurrere*."

The young Commodus had departed from the chamber, anxious to witness the exercises of certain gladiators, having a native taste for such company, inherited, according to popular rumour, from his true father—anxious also to escape from the too impressive company of the gravest and sweetest specimen of old age Marius had ever seen, the tutor of the imperial children, who had arrived to offer his birthday congratulations, and now, very familiarly and affectionately, made a part of the group, falling on the shoulders of the emperor, kissing the empress Faustina on the face, the little ones on the face and hands. Marcus Cornelius Fronto, the "Orator," favourite teacher of the emperor's youth, afterwards his most trusted counsellor, and now the undisputed occupant of the sophistic throne, whose equipage,

elegantly mounted with silver, Marius had seen in the streets of Rome, had certainly turned his many personal gifts to account with a good fortune, remarkable even in that age, so indulgent to professors or rhetoricians. The gratitude of the emperor Aurelius, always generous to his teachers, arranging their very quarrels sometimes, for they were not always fair to one another, had helped him to a really great place in the world. But his sumptuous appendages, including the villa and gardens of Mæcenas, had been borne with an air perfectly becoming, by the professor of a philosophy which, even in its most accomplished and elegant phase, presupposed a gentle contempt for such things. With an intimate practical knowledge of manners, physiognomies, smiles, disguises, flatteries, and courtly tricks of every kind—a whole accomplished rhetoric of daily life—he applied them all to the promotion of humanity, and especially of men's family affection. Through a long life of now eighty years, he had been, as it were, surrounded by the gracious and soothing air of his own eloquence—the fame, the echoes, of it—like warbling birds, or murmuring bees. Setting forth in that fine medium the best ideas of matured pagan philosophy, he had become the favourite "director" of noble youth.

Yes! it was the one instance Marius, always eagerly on the look-out for such, had yet seen of

a perfectly tolerable, perfectly beautiful, old age —an old age in which there seemed, to one who perhaps habitually over-valued the expression of youth, nothing to be regretted, nothing really lost, in what years had taken away. The wise old man, whose blue eyes and fair skin were so delicate, uncontaminate and clear, would seem to have replaced carefully and consciously each natural trait of youth, as it departed from him, by an equivalent grace of culture; and had the blitheness, the placid cheerfulness, as he had also the infirmity, the claim on stronger people, of a delightful child. And yet he seemed to be but awaiting his exit from life—that moment with which the Stoics were almost as much pre-occupied as the Christians, however differently —and set Marius pondering on the contrast between a placidity like this, at eighty years, and the sort of desperateness he was aware of in his own manner of entertaining that thought. His infirmities nevertheless had been painful and long-continued, with losses of children, of pet grandchildren. What with the crowd, and the wretched streets, it was a sign of affection which had cost him something, for the old man to leave his own house at all that day; and he was glad of the emperor's support, as he moved from place to place among the children he protests so often to have loved as his own.

For a strange piece of literary good fortune, at the beginning of the present century, has set

free the long-buried fragrance of this famous friendship of the old world, from below a valueless later manuscript, in a series of letters, wherein the two writers exchange, for the most part their evening thoughts, especially at family anniversaries, and with entire intimacy, on their children, on the art of speech, on all the various subtleties of the "science of images"—rhetorical images—above all, of course, on sleep and matters of health. They are full of mutual admiration of each other's eloquence, restless in absence till they see one another again, noting, characteristically, their very dreams of each other, expecting the day which will terminate the office, the business or duty, which separates them—"as superstitious people watch for the star, at the rising of which they may break their fast." To one of the writers, to Aurelius, the correspondence was sincerely of value. We see him once reading his letters with genuine delight on going to rest. Fronto seeks to deter his pupil from writing in Greek.—Why buy, at great cost, a foreign wine, inferior to that from one's own vineyard? Aurelius, on the other hand, with an extraordinary innate susceptibility to words—*la parole pour la parole*, as the French say—despairs, in presence of Fronto's rhetorical perfection.

Like the modern visitor to the Capitoline and some other museums, Fronto had been struck, pleasantly struck, by the family likeness

among the Antonines; and it was part of his friendship to make much of it, in the case of the children of Faustina. "Well! I have seen the little ones," he writes to Aurelius, then, apparently, absent from them: "I have seen the little ones—the pleasantest sight of my life; for they are as like yourself as could possibly be. It has well repaid me for my journey over that slippery road, and up those steep rocks; for I beheld you, not simply face to face before me, but, more generously, whichever way I turned, to my right and my left. For the rest, I found them, Heaven be thanked! with healthy cheeks and lusty voices. One was holding a slice of white bread, like a king's son; the other a crust of brown bread, as becomes the offspring of a philosopher. I pray the gods to have both the sower and the seed in their keeping; to watch over this field wherein the ears of corn are so kindly alike. Ah! I heard too their pretty voices, so sweet that in the childish prattle of one and the other I seemed somehow to be listening—yes! in that chirping of your pretty chickens—to the limpid and harmonious notes of your own oratory. Take care! you will find me growing independent, having those I could love in your place:—love, on the surety of my eyes and ears."

"*Magistro meo salutem!*" replies the Emperor, "I too have seen my little ones in your sight of them; as, also, I saw yourself in reading your

letter. It is that charming letter forces me to write thus : " with reiterations of affection, that is, which are continual in these letters, on both sides, and which may strike a modern reader perhaps as fulsome ; or, again, as having something in common with the old Judaic unction of friendship. They were certainly sincere.

To one of those children Fronto had now brought the birthday gift of the silver trumpet, upon which he ventured to blow softly now and again, turning away with eyes delighted at the sound, when he thought the old man was not listening. It was the well-worn, valetudinarian subject of sleep, on which Fronto and Aurelius were talking together ; Aurelius always feeling it a burden, Fronto a thing of magic capacities, so that he had written an *encomium* in its praise, and often by ingenious arguments recommends his imperial pupil not to be sparing of it. To-day, with his younger listeners in mind, he had a story to tell about it :—

" They say that our father Jupiter, when he ordered the world at the beginning, divided time into two parts exactly equal : the one part he clothed with light, the other with darkness : he called them Day and Night ; and he assigned rest to the night and to day the work of life. At that time Sleep was not yet born and men passed the whole of their lives awake : only, the quiet of the night was ordained for them, instead of sleep. But it came to pass, little by little,

being that the minds of men are restless, that they carried on their business alike by night as by day, and gave no part at all to repose. And Jupiter, when he perceived that even in the night-time they ceased not from trouble and disputation, and that even the courts of law remained open (it was the pride of Aurelius, as Fronto knew, to be assiduous in those courts till far into the night) resolved to appoint one of his brothers to be the overseer of the night and have authority over man's rest. But Neptune pleaded in excuse the gravity of his constant charge of the seas, and Father Dis the difficulty of keeping in subjection the spirits below; and Jupiter, having taken counsel with the other gods, perceived that the practice of nightly vigils was somewhat in favour. It was then, for the most part, that Juno gave birth to her children: Minerva, the mistress of all art and craft, loved the midnight lamp: Mars delighted in the darkness for his plots and sallies; and the favour of Venus and Bacchus was with those who roused by night. Then it was that Jupiter formed the design of creating Sleep; and he added him to the number of the gods, and gave him the charge over night and rest, putting into his hands the keys of human eyes. With his own hands he mingled the juices wherewith Sleep should soothe the hearts of mortals—herb of Enjoyment and herb of Safety, gathered from a grove in Heaven; and, from the meadows of

Acheron, the herb of Death ; expressing from it one single drop only, no bigger than a tear one might hide. 'With this juice,' he said, 'pour slumber upon the eyelids of mortals. So soon as it hath touched them they will lay themselves down motionless, under thy power. But be not afraid : they shall revive, and in a while stand up again upon their feet.' Thereafter, Jupiter gave wings to Sleep, attached, not, like Mercury's, to his heels, but to his shoulders, like the wings of Love. For he said, 'It becomes thee not to approach men's eyes as with the noise of chariots, and the rushing of a swift courser, but in placid and merciful flight, as upon the wings of a swallow—nay ! with not so much as the flutter of the dove.' Besides all this, that he might be yet pleasanter to men, he committed to him also a multitude of blissful dreams, according to every man's desire. One watched his favourite actor ; another listened to the flute, or guided a charioteer in the race : in his dream, the soldier was victorious, the general was borne in triumph, the wanderer returned home. Yes ! —and sometimes those dreams come true !"

Just then Aurelius was summoned to make the birthday offerings to his household gods. A heavy curtain of tapestry was drawn back ; and beyond it Marius gazed for a few moments into the *Lararium*, or imperial chapel. A patrician youth, in white habit, was in waiting, with a little chest in his hand containing incense for the

use of the altar. On richly carved *consoles*, or side boards, around this narrow chamber, were arranged the rich apparatus of worship and the golden or gilded images, adorned to-day with fresh flowers, among them that image of Fortune from the apartment of Antoninus Pius, and such of the emperor's own teachers as were gone to their rest. A dim fresco on the wall commemorated the ancient piety of Lucius Albinius, who in flight from Rome on the morrow of a great disaster, overtaking certain priests on foot with their sacred utensils, descended from the wagon in which he rode and yielded it to the ministers of the gods. As he ascended into the chapel the emperor paused, and with a grave but friendly look at his young visitor, delivered a parting sentence, audible to him alone: *Imitation is the most acceptable part of worship: the gods had much rather mankind should resemble than flatter them:—Make sure that those to whom you come nearest be the happier by your presence!*

It was the very spirit of the scene and the hour—the hour Marius had spent in the imperial house. How temperate, how tranquillising! what humanity! Yet, as he left the eminent company concerning whose ways of life at home he had been so youthfully curious, and sought, after his manner, to determine the main trait in all this, he had to confess that it was a sentiment of mediocrity, though of a mediocrity for once really golden.

CHAPTER XIV

MANLY AMUSEMENT

DURING the Eastern war there came a moment when schism in the empire had seemed possible through the defection of Lucius Verus; when to Aurelius it had also seemed possible to confirm his allegiance by no less a gift than his beautiful daughter Lucilla, the eldest of his children—the *domnula*, probably, of those letters. The *little lady*, grown now to strong and stately maidenhood, had been ever something of the good genius, the better soul, to Lucius Verus, by the law of contraries, her somewhat cold and apathetic modesty acting as counterfoil to the young man's tigrish fervour. Conducted to Ephesus, she had become his wife by form of civil marriage, the more solemn wedding rites being deferred till their return to Rome.

The ceremony of the *Confarreation*, or religious marriage, in which bride and bridegroom partook together of a certain mystic bread, was celebrated accordingly, with due pomp, early in the spring; Aurelius himself

assisting, with much domestic feeling. A crowd of fashionable people filled the space before the entrance to the apartments of Lucius on the Palatine hill, richly decorated for the occasion, commenting, not always quite delicately, on the various details of the rite, which only a favoured few succeeded in actually witnessing. "She comes!" Marius could hear them say, "escorted by her young brothers: it is the young Commodus who carries the torch of white-thorn-wood, the little basket of work-things, the toys for the children:"—and then, after a watchful pause, "she is winding the woollen thread round the doorposts. Ah! I see the marriage-cake: the bridegroom presents the fire and water." Then, in a longer pause, was heard the chorus, *Thalassie! Thalassie!* and for just a few moments, in the strange light of many wax tapers at noonday, Marius could see them both, side by side, while the bride was lifted over the door-step: Lucius Verus heated and handsome—the pale, impassive Lucilla looking very long and slender, in her closely folded yellow veil, and high nuptial crown.

As Marius turned away, glad to escape from the pressure of the crowd, he found himself face to face with Cornelius, an infrequent spectator on occasions such as this. It was a relief to depart with him—so fresh and quiet he looked, though in all his splendid equestrian array in honour of the ceremony—from the garish heat

of the marriage scene. The reserve which had puzzled Marius so much on his first day in Rome, was but an instance of many, to him wholly unaccountable, avoidances alike of things and persons, which must certainly mean that an intimate companionship would cost him something in the way of seemingly indifferent amusements. Some inward standard Marius seemed to detect there (though wholly unable to estimate its nature) of distinction, selection, refusal, amid the various elements of the fervid and corrupt life across which they were moving together:—some secret, constraining motive, ever on the alert at eye and ear, which carried him through Rome as under a charm, so that Marius could not but think of that figure of the white bird in the market-place as undoubtedly made true of him. And Marius was still full of admiration for this companion, who had known how to make himself very pleasant to him. Here was the clear, cold corrective, which the fever of his present life demanded. Without it, he would have felt alternately suffocated and exhausted by an existence, at once so gaudy and overdone, and yet so intolerably empty; in which people, even at their best, seemed only to be brooding, like the wise emperor himself, over a world's disillusion. For with all the severity of Cornelius, there was such a breeze of hopefulness—freshness and hopefulness, as of new morning, about him.

For the most part, as I said, those refusals, that reserve of his, seemed unaccountable. But there were cases where the unknown monitor acted in a direction with which the judgment, or instinct, of Marius himself wholly concurred; the effective decision of Cornelius strengthening him further therein, as by a kind of outwardly embodied conscience. And the entire drift of his education determined him, on one point at least, to be wholly of the same mind with this peculiar friend (they two, it might be, together, against the world!) when, alone of a whole company of brilliant youth, he had withdrawn from his appointed place in the amphitheatre, at a grand public show, which after an interval of many months, was presented there, in honour of the nuptials of Lucius Verus and Lucilla.

And it was still to the eye, through visible movement and aspect, that the character, or genius of Cornelius made itself felt by Marius; even as on that afternoon when he had girt on his armour, among the expressive lights and shades of the dim old villa at the roadside, and every object of his knightly array had seemed to be but sign or symbol of some other thing far beyond it. For, consistently with his really poetic temper, all influence reached Marius, even more exclusively than he was aware, through the medium of sense. From Flavian in that brief early summer of his existence, he had derived a powerful impression of the

"perpetual flux": he had caught there, as in cipher or symbol, or low whispers more effective than any definite language, his own Cyrenaic philosophy, presented thus, for the first time, in an image or person, with much attractiveness, touched also, consequently, with a pathetic sense of personal sorrow:—a concrete image, the abstract equivalent of which he could recognise afterwards, when the agitating personal influence had settled down for him, clearly enough, into a theory of practice. But of what possible intellectual formula could this mystic Cornelius be the sensible exponent; seeming, as he did, to live ever in close relationship with, and recognition of, a mental view, a source of discernment, a light upon his way, which had certainly not yet sprung up for Marius? Meantime, the discretion of Cornelius, his energetic clearness and purity, were a charm, rather physical than moral: his exquisite correctness of spirit, at all events, accorded so perfectly with the regular beauty of his person, as to seem to depend upon it. And wholly different as was this later friendship, with its exigency, its warnings, its restraints, from the feverish attachment to Flavian, which had made him at times like an uneasy slave, still, like that, it was a reconciliation to the world of sense, the visible world. From the hopefulness of this gracious presence, all visible things around him, even the commonest objects of everyday life—if they but

stood together to warm their hands at the same fire—took for him a new poetry, a delicate fresh bloom, and interest. It was as if his bodily eyes had been indeed mystically washed, renewed, strengthened.

And how eagerly, with what a light heart, would Flavian have taken his place in the amphitheatre, among the youth of his own age! with what an appetite for every detail of the entertainment, and its various accessories:—the sunshine, filtered into soft gold by the *vela*, with their serpentine patterning, spread over the more select part of the company; the Vestal virgins, taking their privilege of seats near the empress Faustina, who sat there in a maze of double-coloured gems, changing, as she moved, like the waves of the sea; the cool circle of shadow, in which the wonderful toilets of the fashionable told so effectively around the blazing arena, covered again and again during the many hours' show, with clean sand for the absorption of certain great red patches there, by troops of white-shirted boys, for whom the good-natured audience provided a scramble of nuts and small coin, flung to them over a trellis-work of silver-gilt and amber, precious gift of Nero, while a rain of flowers and perfume fell over themselves, as they paused between the parts of their long feast upon the spectacle of animal suffering.

During his sojourn at Ephesus, Lucius Verus had readily become a patron, patron or *protégé*,

of the great goddess of Ephesus, the goddess of hunters; and the show, celebrated by way of a compliment to him to-day, was to present some incidents of her story, where she figures almost as the genius of madness, in animals, or in the humanity which comes in contact with them. The entertainment would have an element of old Greek revival in it, welcome to the taste of a learned and Hellenising society; and, as Lucius Verus was in some sense a lover of animals, was to be a display of animals mainly. There would be real wild and domestic creatures, all of rare species; and a real slaughter. On so happy an occasion, it was hoped, the elder emperor might even concede a point, and a living criminal fall into the jaws of the wild beasts. And the spectacle was, certainly, to end in the destruction, by one mighty shower of arrows, of a hundred lions, "nobly" provided by Aurelius himself for the amusement of his people.—*Tam magnanimus fuit!*

The arena, decked and in order for the first scene, looked delightfully fresh, re-inforcing on the spirits of the audience the actual freshness of the morning, which at this season still brought the dew. Along the subterranean ways that led up to it, the sound of an advancing chorus was heard at last, chanting the words of a sacred song, or hymn to Diana; for the spectacle of the amphitheatre was, after all, a

religious occasion. To its grim acts of blood-shedding a kind of sacrificial character still belonged in the view of certain religious casuists, tending conveniently to soothe the humane sensibilities of so pious an emperor as Aurelius, who, in his fraternal complacency, had consented to preside over the shows.

Artemis or Diana, as she may be understood in the actual development of her worship, was, indeed, the symbolical expression of two allied yet contrasted elements of human temper and experience—man's amity, and also his enmity, towards the wild creatures, when they were still, in a certain sense, his brothers. She is the complete, and therefore highly complex, representative of a state, in which man was still much occupied with animals, not as his flock, or as his servants after the pastoral relationship of our later, orderly world, but rather as his equals, on friendly terms or the reverse,—a state full of primeval sympathies and antipathies, of rivalries and common wants—while he watched, and could enter into, the humours of those "younger brothers," with an intimacy, the "survivals" of which in a later age seem often to have had a kind of madness about them. Diana represents alike the bright and the dark side of such relationship. But the humanities of that relationship were all forgotten to-day in the excitement of a show, in which mere cruelty to animals, their useless suffering and death, formed

the main point of interest. People watched their destruction, batch after batch, in a not particularly inventive fashion; though it was expected that the animals themselves, as living creatures are apt to do when hard put to it, would become inventive, and make up, by the fantastic accidents of their agony, for the deficiencies of an age fallen behind in this matter of manly amusement. It was as a Deity of Slaughter—the Taurian goddess who demands the sacrifice of the shipwrecked sailors thrown on her coasts—the cruel, moonstruck huntress, who brings not only sudden death, but *rabies*, among the wild creatures that Diana was to be presented, in the person of a famous courtesan. The aim at an actual theatrical illusion, after the first introductory scene, was frankly surrendered to the display of the animals, artificially stimulated and maddened to attack each other. And as Diana was also a special protectress of new-born creatures, there would be a certain curious interest in the dexterously contrived escape of the young from their mother's torn bosoms; as many pregnant animals as possible being carefully selected for the purpose.

The time had been, and was to come again, when the pleasures of the amphitheatre centered in a similar practical joking upon human beings. What more ingenious diversion had stage manager ever contrived than that incident, itself a practical epigram never to be forgotten,

when a criminal, who, like slaves and animals, had no rights, was compelled to present the part of Icarus; and, the wings failing him in due course, had fallen into a pack of hungry bears? For the long shows of the amphitheatre were, so to speak, the novel-reading of that age—a current help provided for sluggish imaginations, in regard, for instance, to grisly accidents, such as might happen to one's self; but with every facility for comfortable inspection. Scævola might watch his own hand, consuming, crackling, in the fire, in the person of a culprit, willing to redeem his life by an act so delightful to the eyes, the very ears, of a curious public. If the part of Marsyas was called for, there was a criminal condemned to lose his skin. It might be almost edifying to study minutely the expression of his face, while the assistants corded and pegged him to the bench, cunningly; the servant of the law waiting by, who, after one short cut with his knife, would slip the man's leg from his skin, as neatly as if it were a stocking—a *finesse* in providing the due amount of suffering for wrong-doers only brought to its height in Nero's living bonfires. But then, by making his suffering ridiculous, you enlist against the sufferer, some real, and all would-be manliness, and do much to stifle any false sentiment of compassion. The philosophic emperor, having no great taste for sport, and asserting here a personal scruple, had greatly changed all

that; had provided that nets should be spread under the dancers on the tight-rope, and buttons for the swords of the gladiators. But the gladiators were still there. Their bloody contests had, under the form of a popular amusement, the efficacy of a human sacrifice; as, indeed, the whole system of the public shows was understood to possess a religious import. Just at this point, certainly, the judgment of Lucretius on pagan religion is without reproach—

Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum.

And Marius, weary and indignant, feeling isolated in the great slaughter-house, could not but observe that, in his habitual complaisance to Lucius Verus, who, with loud shouts of applause from time to time, lounged beside him, Aurelius had sat impassibly through all the hours Marius himself had remained there. For the most part indeed, the emperor had actually averted his eyes from the show, reading, or writing on matters of public business, but had seemed, after all, indifferent. He was revolving, perhaps, that old Stoic paradox of the *Imperceptibility of pain;* which might serve as an excuse, should those savage popular humours ever again turn against men and women. Marius remembered well his very attitude and expression on this day, when, a few years later, certain things came to pass in Gaul, under his full authority; and that attitude and expression

defined already, even thus early in their so friendly intercourse, and though he was still full of gratitude for his interest, a permanent point of difference between the emperor and himself—between himself, with all the convictions of his life taking centre to-day in his merciful, angry heart, and Aurelius, as representing all the light, all the apprehensive power there might be in pagan intellect. There was something in a tolerance such as this, in the bare fact that he could sit patiently through a scene like this, which seemed to Marius to mark Aurelius as his inferior now and for ever on the question of righteousness; to set them on opposite sides, in some great conflict, of which that difference was but a single presentment. Due, in whatever proportions, to the abstract principles he had formulated for himself, or in spite of them, there was the loyal conscience within him, deciding, judging himself and every one else, with a wonderful sort of authority:—You ought, methinks, to be something quite different from what you are; here! and here! Surely Aurelius must be lacking in that decisive conscience at first sight, of the intimations of which Marius could entertain no doubt—which he looked for in others. He at least, the humble follower of the bodily eye, was aware of a crisis in life, in this brief, obscure existence, a fierce opposition of real good and real evil around him, the issues of which he must by no

means compromise or confuse ; of the antagonisms of which the "wise" Marcus Aurelius was unaware.

That long chapter of the cruelty of the Roman public shows may, perhaps, leave with the children of the modern world a feeling of self-complacency. Yet it might seem well to ask ourselves—it is always well to do so, when we read of the slave-trade, for instance, or of great religious persecutions on this side or on that, or of anything else which raises in us the question, "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?"—not merely, what germs of feeling we may entertain which, under fitting circumstances, would induce us to the like ; but, even more practically, what thoughts, what sort of considerations, may be actually present to our minds such as might have furnished us, living in another age, and in the midst of those legal crimes, with plausible excuses for them : each age in turn, perhaps, having its own peculiar point of blindness, with its consequent peculiar sin—the touch-stone of an unfailing conscience in the select few.

Those cruel amusements were, certainly, the sin of blindness, of deadness and stupidity, in the age of Marius ; and his light had not failed him regarding it. Yes ! what was needed was the heart that would make it impossible to witness all this ; and the future would be with the forces that could beget a heart like that.

His chosen philosophy had said,—Trust the eye : Strive to be right always in regard to the concrete experience : Beware of falsifying your impressions. And its sanction had at least been effective here, in protesting—"This, and this, is what you may not look upon!"—Surely evil was a real thing, and the wise man wanting in the sense of it, where, not to have been, by instinctive election, on the right side, was to have failed in life.

END OF VOL. I

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